

THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH GRADE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH ACADEMIC
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT DENIED-ACCREDITATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
IN VIRGINIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Allison Knappenberger

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to understand third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools. Parent involvement refers to two-way communication between parents and teachers. Denied accreditation refers to schools scoring below 70% on state assessments for four or more consecutive years. The theories guiding this study were the Getzels and Guba (1957) social systems theory and Bakhtin's (1986) theory of dialogism as they influence teachers' experiences of academic parental involvement through socio-psychological and dialogic environmental interactions. The research questions for this study included: How do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools describe their experiences with academic parental involvement?; What specific training do participants experience to encourage and respond to academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools?; In what ways do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers perceive their experiences with academic parental involvement influence their communication methods with parents at denied-accreditation schools? Utilizing Moustakas' (1994) structured approach to research, data collection, horizontalization, and triangulation included pictorial representations, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview. Due to the transcendental, phenomenological approach, bracketing was utilized to assure that the lived experiences of the participants were understood and not interpreted. Finally, Moustakas' steps created a composite description that will help to understand the essence of the phenomenon.

Keywords: adequate yearly progress, dialogism, parental involvement, Standards of Learning.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to teachers and parents, who day in and day out, strive to make sure their students and children gain the best education possible allowing dreams to come true. It is my hope and prayer that teachers continue the open communication between school and the families they serve. I also dedicate this work to my mother who stayed involved throughout my schooling whether it was an A or a D on a test and who pushed me to continually do my best work.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my mother and grandmother, whose example of a strong work ethic led me on this path through education. They are both clothed in strength and dignity which I have inherited from them. I may not have always been the best student, but their ongoing support and guidance pushed me past the hard days both in my preservice teaching education and in my teaching career. Second, I want to thank my committee who guided me and cheered me on throughout this journey of education that at times felt long and arduous. For their many hours of reviews, comments and suggestions, I am grateful. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and professors who also cheered me on and coached me through the days I wanted to give up and who listened to all of my thoughts with a kind ear. For all of these people, I am thankful. It is by the grace of God, who has offered me this opportunity and a love of education that I am what I am and his grace was not without effect. 1 Corinthians 15:10

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List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Content Validity Ratio (CVR)

Department of Defense (DOD)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

English Learners (ELs)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National School Climate Center (NSCC)

National Education Association (NEA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

School Identified for Improvement (SIFI)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Standards of learning (SOL)

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of Chapter One is to provide a framework for the current study. The foundation for the problem stems from the number of schools in the state of Virginia that have been denied accreditation due to their state assessment scores and failure to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks set by the state (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2016). Current literature describes the overlapping spheres of influence including school, family, and community partnerships necessary for students' chances of success in school (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Klemencic, Mirazchiyski, & Sandoval-Hernandez, 2011). This chapter includes a brief background of the literature, the researcher's role in the situation, and the significance of the study for teachers, parents, and administration. The chapter will also include the three research questions, a research plan, the limitations and delimitations, and definitions for terms used throughout the study. Chapter One concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Background

Historical Context

The role of the parent in education has evolved over the years as a result of research that explored the relationship between parental involvement and the child's academic achievement (Jeynes, 2012). Prior to the research, parents did not interact with the schools, trusting that they would prepare students in academics and character; however, Hoyt (1984) was one of the first researchers to explain that parents had a right and responsibility to be involved in the schooling process. Over the years, legislature has added to the rights and responsibilities of parents and parent involvement in school. As the body of research on parent involvement expanded, states also began requiring that parents are actively involved in academics (Every Student Succeeds

Act [ESSA], 2015). Beyond the educational researchers, school districts have historically studied parent involvement and its effects on students' academic achievement. Elementary schools that thrive, meet, or exceed state testing benchmarks on standardized tests in both math and reading share similar characteristics including amount of parent involvement (VDOE, 2016). Very little research has been conducted to investigate the problem of teachers' experiences of parental involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools and the complex relationship between teachers and parents (Polesel, Dulfer, & Turnbull, 2012).

Social Context

The social relationship between teachers and parents ranges from comfortable and secure to negative and volatile. In a study conducted by Karakus and Savas (2012), the findings showed that as parents became more involved in school activities, they began to interact more favorably with teachers and this in turn increased the teachers' trust in parents creating a positive environment for everyone. This supports parental involvement and relationship quality between teacher and parent as two of the most influential factors determining the effectiveness of educational activities (Karakus & Savas, 2012). Adversely, when schools in Virginia do not meet benchmark scores for four of more consecutive years, they are threatened with turnaround programs and reconstitution with new staff hiring (VDOE, 2016). Understanding the experiences of teachers and parent involvement at failing schools can help parents, administration, and stakeholders to determine what is best for the morale of the school (Stotsky & Holzman, 2015). The research problem of understanding teachers' experiences of parental involvement affects not only the parents and teachers but also the students, administration, and outside community.

Theoretical Context

Two theories provide the structure and context for the theoretical framework of this study: the Getzels-Guba (1957) socio-psychology theory of social behavior in administration and Bakhtin's (1986) communication theory of dialogism. The theoretical concepts and principles underpinning this research designate education as an institution that is purposive, peopled, structural, normative, and sanction-bearing (Getzels & Guba, 1957). As with many institutions, leaders must find ways to integrate institutional demands with staff demands to create a productive and fulfilling institution. Bakhtin's (1986) communication theory of dialogism extends the study of institutions to include a communication component between sender and receiver. The current research of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with parent involvement at denied-accreditation schools in Virginia while grounded in social behavior and communication theory adds a new perspective to the body of existing literature on the topic.

Situation to Self

The influence of parental involvement on teachers at a low-performing school became evident during my first year of teaching in a low-performing high school. My negative experiences communicating with parents shaped the way I approached parent involvement in my classroom. The school where I was employed was accredited with warning, and the state of Virginia was beginning to play an integral role in the daily workings of the teachers and administration through school improvement plans and lesson planning. Each year, the public school's administration published the test results, and the community had the right to view those scores. After two years of accreditation with warning for failure to meet AYP, the parents as stakeholders grew concerned that the school would be denied its state accreditation rating. Many

of the parents were concerned about the implications it held for their children and future graduates of an unaccredited high school.

As an English teacher, I experienced the concern of parents through various communication methods including emails, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and teacher website communication. In my experience, as the years progressed with the warning accreditation rating, the parent involvement became increasingly hostile towards teachers; I found myself having to defend my grading choices and assignment choices weekly. Even with the use of rubrics and explicit assignment instructions, parents questioned my credibility and intelligence because I was teaching in a failing school. I found myself not responding promptly to parent contacts and dreading parent involvement. The state label on the school lowered my credibility as a teacher and influenced my attitude towards parents as well. What was once helpful and supportive parent involvement became a pressure that was more harmful than helpful to my teaching morale and caused me to refrain from reaching out to parents.

My philosophical assumptions derive from an ontological framework (Creswell, 2013). I believe that there are multiple realities that are formed from different individuals' perspectives and experiences. These multiple realities must be explored through different forms of evidence such as the ones chosen for this study including pictorial representations, interviews, and a focus group interview (Moustakas, 1994). Schraw and Olafson (2008) stated that studies of ontological world views are not common in the education field; however, teachers can have a critical ontology where they become political agents researching their own practices and belief systems and world views (Olafson, Schraw, & Vander Veldt, 2010). My philosophical assumption and worldview derives from an ontology that develops "the ways in which teachers see themselves [which] can then become connected to the social, political, cultural, economic,

and historical world around them” (Olafson et al., 2010, p. 246). An ontological view also allows for the potential of the human to initiate new beginnings representing the essence of formal education (Magrini, 2013). It is important to remove myself from the research because my reality differs from the participants’ lived experiences, and through bracketing, I will be able to perceive what is communicated without tainting it with preconceived ideas (Moustakas, 1994).

Social constructivism paradigm guided this study. Due to the influence of the world in which I live and work, I constructed meaning based on multiple meanings and viewpoints. The theoretical frameworks of Getzels and Guba (1957) and Bakhtin (1986) relied heavily on socio-psychology and dialogic communication theory where reality is socially constructed and communication is based on those social interactions of the sender and the receiver (Bakhtin, 1986; Getzels & Guba, 1957). Here, the teacher and the parent communicate based on two different viewpoints, and as the researcher, it is my job to construct a description of a phenomenon from the teachers’ points of view. Teacher experiences were depicted through the use of pictorial representations, semi-structured interview questions, and a focus group interview (Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Carrera & Oceja, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1931; Kitzinger, 1995; Rabionet, 2011).

Problem Statement

There are 338 schools in the state of Virginia that are not fully accredited, and 94 schools have been denied accreditation. Fifty-nine of those 94 schools are elementary schools where students gain a foundation for all future studies (VDOE, 2016). The problem of this study was third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers’ experiences with academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation public elementary schools in Virginia. Parents and teachers sometimes lack methods of parent involvement to prepare students at denied-accreditation elementary schools to

meet the rigorous benchmarks set forth by the VDOE (2016). Without a family and school partnership, students could be missing educational opportunities that raise test scores and increase intellectual growth (VDOE, 2016). Teachers who have a negative perception of academic parental involvement tend to unknowingly create barriers that hamper future parent participation (Christianakis, 2011; McNeal, 2012). Barriers include not communicating regularly, not explaining oneself when parents question assignments, and not grading fairly in order to inflate grades (Christianakis, 2011). Adversely, research has shown that positive parent-teacher involvement plays a pivotal role in students' achievement in areas such as grades, test scores, and graduation rates (Christenson, Hurley, Sheridan, & Fenstermacher, 1997; Loera, Rueda, & Nakamoto, 2011). Teachers also experience a greater sense of satisfaction knowing that parents are interacting at home academically and communicating regularly with them (Jacobbe, Ross, & Hensberry, 2012; Li & Hung, 2011).

All teachers experience academic, parental involvement; however, three of the most stressful grades at the elementary level in Virginia are the third, fourth, and fifth testing grades due to the gravity of the tests given at the elementary level (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003). Therefore, participants from third, fourth, and fifth grade were chosen to describe their experiences with parent involvement as it helps or hinders preparation for the state assessments and overall student achievement in academics (VDOE, 2016). Value conflicts between teachers and school administration in schools with high-stakes testing are one cause of teacher burnout and stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). The National Education Association's (NEA, 2015) mission is to advocate for education professionals to ensure that their stress is not beyond a healthy level and to unite the members to promote public education. Specifically, the NEA (2015) found that 72% of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers felt moderate or extreme pressure

from school and administration, and only 15% considered the influence in the classroom to be positive. Furthermore, teachers in the Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) interviews “pointed at critical and negative references to teachers and schools in the media. Some teachers also referred to a feeling that they had low status among the parents. This feeling turned mandatory meetings with parents into a stress factor” (p. 186).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to understand third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers’ experiences with academic parental involvement at elementary schools in Virginia scoring below 70% on state assessments for four or more consecutive years. These understandings can be helpful for teachers, parents, and schools when providing training to staff and families to meet the rigorous benchmarks determined by the VDOE. At this stage in the research, experiences of *academic parent involvement* will be generally defined as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 3). The teachers asked to participate have at least two years of teaching experience overall and hold a valid Virginia teaching license. Teachers must have at least one year of experience teaching in an elementary school that is currently rated as a denied-accreditation school by the state of Virginia. The theories guiding this study are the Getzels-Guba (1957) socio-psychology theory and Bakhtin’s (1986) dialogic communication theory as they describe the social and environmental factors where messages sent and messages received from a sender and recipient carry different meanings based on past experiences and social behavior. Getzels and Guba (1957) contributed to the purpose of the study by integrating an institutional aspect to education where there is a structural, functional, and contextual process hierarchy for administration and supervision. The task is to

fulfill both teacher and institution role expectations and individual need dispositions while goals, such as achieving full accreditation, are achieved. The way that communication is integrated must be organizationally productive and individually fulfilling (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

Significance of the Study

Education responsibility trends have changed over the years. For example, until the 1960s, parents exercised great responsibility in educating their children (Stitt & Brooks, 2014). From the 1960s to the 1980s, schools aimed to take on the role of main education provider until the publishing of “A Nation at Risk” in 1983 (Stitt & Brooks, 2014; United States, 1983). However, within the last 40 years and with the passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001 and the updated Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, involvement mandates are asking families to reintroduce the role of parent as educator in order to increase academic achievement (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2008). The NCLB and ESSA accountability benchmarks, instruction, classwork, courses, and schools’ testing requirements are more rigorous (Brown, Boser, Sargrad, & Marchitello, 2016; Minarechova, 2012; Polesel et al., 2012; The Education Trust, 2016). Students’ grades and their ability to pass a standardized test can mean the difference between a school that is fully accredited and one that is denied accreditation. Much quantitative research has been conducted in the area of parental involvement and its influence on students’ scores, behavior, graduation rates, and attendance with future research requiring different levels and sectors inclusive of the views of students and teachers (Polesel et al., 2012). However, there is a gap in the literature that leaves parent involvement as experienced by teachers unexamined, especially at failing elementary schools in Grades 3, 4, and 5 (Kanfush, 2014; Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014). Very little research has been conducted on Virginia public schools where accreditation has been denied after four or more consecutive years of not

meeting AYP (Polesel et al., 2012). Many implications for further practice, such as how to foster positive parental involvement, specify failing schools need quantitative and qualitative exploration (Polesel et al., 2012). Determining how the teachers experience parental involvement in those schools could have an influence on why or how schools lose accreditation but even more so, how they can regain it (Polesel et al., 2012). A state accreditation label can either repel or attract stakeholders and future stakeholders. The command of a school performance label is an extremely powerful and influential one (Klaf, 2013).

The practical significance of this study is to help schools prepare and professionally develop teachers for better parent involvement through various modes and situations explored before entering the full-time, teaching profession and during in-service professional development. Surprisingly, teacher preparation programs do not explicitly address the issue of parental involvement (Unal & Unal, 2014). Not only do preservice teachers lack the training necessary to effectively collaborate with parents, but full-time teachers lack the professional development to involve parents through evolving technology (Dubis & Bernadowski, 2015; Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015; Unal & Unal, 2014). As teacher preparation programs progress, many preservice teachers cite an inverse relationship between their attitudes toward parental involvement and the degree to which they felt prepared for it through coursework and fieldwork (Unal & Unal, 2014). When teacher preparation programs leave out the parent involvement component of education, preservice teachers neither prepare for it nor value it as a contributing factor to student or school success (Sukhbaatar, 2014). Interestingly, preservice teachers acknowledge that their teaching skills were partly shaped by their student teaching experiences and that those experiences would carry over to their professional teaching experiences with parents (Katz & Bauch, 1999; Sukhbaatar, 2014). Therefore, preservice teachers may lack

parent involvement skills in their full-time teaching career if schools lack specific training in that area (Sukhbaatar, 2014). In addition to preservice teachers, full-time educators with little experience in the classroom tend to struggle with improving parent involvement (Sukhbaatar, 2014).

Another proposed significance of this study was to find ways to improve the conditions, lives, and work environments of teachers by giving their experiences with parental involvement a voice in a public forum. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers bear the weight of the school when it comes to increasing students' test scores where testing and accreditation are concerned (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Orange, 2014). In the state of Virginia, kindergarten through second-grade students are not state tested with end-of-year Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments even though the skills learned in those grades act as a foundation to build upon in later grades (Orange, 2014; VDOE, 2016). One cause of stress regarding failing schools and parental involvement is the staff workload that includes parent involvement logs necessary for teachers to keep when working under a school improvement plan (Orange, 2014).

There are 1,828 public schools in the state of Virginia. The 2016-2017 school year accreditations records designated 94 denied-accreditation schools, 79 partially accredited due to reconstitution schools, and 95 partially-accredited schools in warning (VDOE, 2016). The previous school year (2015-2016) recorded 22 denied-accreditation schools, 35 partially accredited due to reconstitution schools, and 215 partially-accredited schools in warning (VDOE, 2016). Schools that are partially accredited with warning are nearing a denied-accreditation rating. Schools that have already been reconstituted were previously denied-accreditation schools that were assigned a turnaround company and underwent possible staff and administration termination and rehiring (VDOE, 2016). Many times, the stress and workload of

failing schools seems to focus on the testing grade teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grade, and teachers perceive this attention negatively from school administration, co-workers, and parents (Orange, 2014; Robinson & Werblow, 2012). For teachers to feel comfortable in their position during school-wide changes, the changes must align with their beliefs about teaching, teaching styles, and personalities (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). When teachers perceive a lack of parental involvement, they are less likely to value it as a method to move the school away from its failing status, and if the level of involvement does not increase, teacher stress will rise and they become strained (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). This strain could present a state of mental and emotional tension including nervousness and an overall uneasiness (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005).

An overburdening of societal beliefs on the teachers at denied-accreditation schools stem from the theoretical framework of socio-psychological theorists, Getzels and Guba (1957). There may exist a primary concern with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction within two dimensions of a social system of an organization and the individuals (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The theoretical significance of school effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction was explored in relation to the Getzels-Guba (1957) dimensions where teachers' experiences with parental involvement are also based on societies' perceptions. Society tends to speak out negatively about public schools today and actively seeks information only reiterating that the schools are failing and at times implying that the teachers are failing the students (Foster, 2014).

It is imperative that parents and teachers continue a relational trust, even in failing schools, because it powerfully influences the quality of social exchanges that can also improve the schools (Bryk, 2010; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). The second theoretical contribution of the study was Bakhtin's (1986) dialogic communication theory where there is imaginary speech between the sender and the receiver, and each brings his or her own meaning to the exchange.

The positive exchange and involvement between teachers and parents can also improve students' attendance and overall effort in school (Johnson et al., 2012; Schwebel, 2012). In the end, the theoretical frameworks of Bakhtin and Getzels and Guba come together to link social psychology with culture and communication to support schools with a climate that ensures order; engages parents; supports student learning; and ensures teacher, student, community, and parent satisfaction (Bakhtin, 1986; Getzels & Guba, 1957; Johnson et al., 2012).

The empirical significance of the study stems from the interviews and horizontalization of themes across teacher experiences. A focus group interview also played a practical role in understanding the degree of positive or negative experiences with academic parent involvement in third, fourth, and fifth grade denied-accreditation elementary public schools in Virginia. The study described the experiences of teachers and their communication strategies with a clustering of meaning into themes. In previous studies, parents with low communication activity were mainly concerned with their child's grades and health (Sahin & Atabey, 2014). More active parents also enjoyed discussing feedback and evaluation systems (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015; Sahin & Atabey, 2014). From Palts and Harro-Loit's (2015) study, the empirical data from six focus group interviews revealed five communication patterns: communication-literate and flexible parents, passive-positive parents, active-positive parents, passive-negative parents, and active-negative parents. A scale for teacher-parent communication and collaboration was used and further studies have been conducted using the scale to investigate family communication and collaboration efforts for a child attending primary school (Sahin & Atabey, 2014).

Qualitative research regarding experiences of parental involvement for third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers and their communication methods based on their experiences may help school districts and administration find ways to create positive, academic, parent involvement

experiences. Understanding the specific experiences of teachers which cause them to dismiss or feel uncomfortable with parent involvement rather than accept involvement from home can offer insight into further analysis of parent involvement (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015).

School accreditation can be another empirical significance of this study. Research of this nature could offer significant findings for educational practices that can not only help students and schools succeed but also allow parents to partner with schools and reinforce what is taught in the classroom. Studies have explored partnering with parents to build digital literacy or specific subject area proficiencies but many limitations necessitate the need for studies on parent involvement practices that can raise overall school academic achievement (Machado-Casas, Sanchez, & Ek, 2014; Randles, 2014; Zurcher, 2016).

Research Questions

Although there have been many quantitative studies identifying the most effective forms of parental involvement and parental involvement programs in relationship to voices of the parents (Garbacz, McDowall, Schaughency, Sheridan, & Welch, 2015; Jeynes, 2012), a gap exists in the literature related to the voices of the teachers, especially in schools that have failed to make AYP in reading or math for four or more consecutive years (Tveit, 2013). Triangulation of teachers' pictorial representations, interviews, and a focus group interview is missing in the current literature. Describing third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' lived experiences with academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation public schools allows their voices to be heard (Moustakas, 1994). Research questions will be successful depending on the extent to which the questions explain lived experiences distinct from the theoretical explanations of the theories and former research (Colaizzi, 1978). The three research questions for this transcendental, phenomenological, qualitative study were:

RQ1: How do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools describe their experiences with academic parental involvement?

Teaching third, fourth, and fifth grade testing subjects is stressful; additionally, teaching at a school that has been denied accreditation due to low test scores and lack of yearly progress can influence the experiences of teachers with parent involvement (NEA, 2015). Although parents have spoken up in various research studies regarding their experiences with teachers and involvement efforts, little is known about teachers' lived experiences with parents, adding a fresh perspective for administration, parents, and other teachers (Pillet-Shore, 2015).

RQ2: What preservice and in-service training do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers experience to foster academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools?

Preservice teachers are aspiring educators who are currently undergoing supervised teaching training at the college level (Kennedy, 1999). In-service teacher training is professional staff development for employed teachers where they are trained and work with their coworkers (Kennedy, 1999). Qualitative research has found that sparse amounts of formal training have been given to teachers in preservice courses to support real-life parent interactions and partnerships or to engage parents in the daily events of the school or classroom (Epstein, 2001; Lindberg, 2014). Specific leadership and communication training for teachers could aid in creating professional development ideas for in-service teachers as well as real-life training for preservice teachers in areas including parents as supporters of teaching activities and as volunteers for administrative work in the school or classroom (Lindberg, 2014). This direct training could increase the confidence of teachers and preservice teachers when collaborating with families for school and classroom success (Lindberg, 2014).

RQ3: In what ways do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers perceive their experiences with academic parental involvement influence their communication methods with parents at denied-accreditation schools?

Research has shown that not all parental involvement is positive, and at times can cause stressful situations for teachers in already stressful, state testing grades (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). When teachers perceive that they are not trusted by the parents, or “that parents are critical or that cooperating with parents is difficult [it] reduces the teachers’ beliefs in their ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that is required to attain given educational goals” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, p. 1065). Research conducted by Adams and Christenson (2000) showed that parents trust teachers more than teachers trust the parents, but it is the parents who have more at stake than the teachers. As teachers and parents decrease the amount of contact they have, the trustworthy behavior declines and views on both sides diminish which can lead to lower levels of trust and less willingness and ability to help by both the parents and the teachers (Adams & Christenson, 2000). How teachers experience academic parental involvement can influence how they choose to communicate with parents (McNeal, 2012).

Definitions

The following definitions include key terms, state-specific terms and are provided for clarity and understanding:

1. *Adequate yearly progress (AYP)* - Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a timeline that each state establishes no later than 12 years after the 2001-2002 school year which ensures that all schools will meet those state standards. Its purpose is to act as a diagnostic tool to determine progress of schools, those which are failing and those who need financial resource allocations (Paige, 2002).

2. *Denied accreditation* - Schools which have received an accreditation denied rating have failed to meet AYP for four consecutive years. Once a school receives the rating, it has 30 days to propose a corrective action plan that must include at least employing an approved turnaround specialist, some personal changes may occur and the school board may choose to close the school, combine it with a higher performing school in the division, or reconstitute the school (VDOE, 2016).
3. *Parent involvement* - Parent involvement is defined as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA], 1965, § 9101).
4. *Reconstituted schools* - A reconstituted school is a school that received an accreditation denied rating and decisions were made to restructure the school’s governance, instructional program, staff and student population (Hamilton, Heilig, & Pazey, 2014). Denied-accreditation rated districts with more than one third of its schools must also evaluate the superintendent (VDOE, 2016).
5. *Standards of Learning* - Standards of Learning or SOLs are standards for Virginia Public Schools that establish the minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade in the core subjects (VDOE, 2016).
6. *Title I* - Title I is a program of the ESEA created to “ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments (ESEA, § 6301).

Summary

Chapter One provides an introduction and an overview for this study of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with parent involvement at denied-accreditation public schools in the state of Virginia. The problem is third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation public elementary schools in Virginia. The purpose of the study is to understand third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' parental involvement experiences at denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia. The research questions, role of the researcher, and the significance of the study have been presented as well as definitions. Parent involvement provides opportunities for the students and teachers to advance classroom instruction that would be otherwise difficult without academic parent involvement (VDOE, 2016). Teachers also have a greater sense of satisfaction knowing that parent involvement is occurring in the classroom and in the home (Jacobbe et al., 2012; Li & Hung, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two presents the theories that frame this study and reviews current literature on the topic of academic parent involvement in relation to the positive and negative experiences of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in unaccredited schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in theories of social behavior communication and meaning-created communication theory. The research questions aimed at describing the experiences of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers with academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation public schools in Virginia depends heavily on methods of communication between teachers and parents socially and psychologically.

The Getzels and Guba (1957) socio-psychology theory of social behavior applies broadly to an institution, its role and expectations as well as an individual, his or her personality and need-disposition all in a social system such as a school. Bakhtinian theory posits that there is a level of participation needed from both perspectives in order to construct meaning beyond what is normally seen and that therein must be other interpretations if one's own interpretation exists (Bakhtin, 1986).

Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) used Bakhtin's (1986) theory in conjunction with the Getzels-Guba (1957) theory to describe teachers' experiences with different attitudes and voices of parents during parent-teacher involvement. Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) proposed five communication patterns that take into consideration the ways parents interact with teachers. The five patterns include: communication-literate and flexible parents, passive-positive parents, active-positive parents, passive-negative parents, and active-negative parents (Sahin & Atabey,

2014). Parent-teacher communication patterns are dependent on the issues and goals of interactions much like the Getzels-Guba theory of goal achievement through socio-psychological behavior (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). In relation to Bakhtin's (1986) communication theory of dialogism, the previous experiences and memories influence parents with normative attitudes bringing evolving meaning to the interaction (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015).

The Getzels-Guba Socio-Psychological Theory of Social Behavior

Organizational models for education were used to view schools as a social system during the early stages of managing education as an institution (Dornbusch, Glasgow, & Lin, 1996; Getzels & Guba, 1957). The Getzels-Guba (1957) theoretical model for understanding social behavior in a hierarchical setting is applicable to a school or even a single class regardless of the level or size of the unit. The Getzels-Guba model relies on noteworthy characteristics for these "institutions," included institutions are: purposive, peopled, structural, normative and sanction-bearing (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

Getzels and Guba (1957) theorized the idea of school as an institution stemming from John Franklin Bobbitt (1913) who saw no difference between industrial production and process of instruction (Waldow, 2015). Borrowing the terms from the field of industrial production, the product is the pupils' knowledge and skills, machinery is instruction, teachers and pupils are the workers, society is the customer, and school itself is a factory (Bobbitt, 1913; Waldow, 2015).

In order to understand the behavioral expectations of roles, it is necessary to identify required expectations and prohibited behaviors (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015). Therefore, behavioral expectations integrate the satisfactions of both the institution and individual goals and needs to create high productivity, job satisfaction, and morale (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015). Based on the Getzels-Guba (1957) theoretical basis, staff members do best when the demands of

the institution and the demands of the staff members are organizationally productive and individually fulfilling (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015).

The behavior systems within these institutions posited by Getzels and Guba (1957) classify complex interrelations between three dimensions including, the idiographic (individual or psychological), nomothetic (organizational or sociological), and cultural (context or ethnographic). Therefore, it is said that social behavior results from an individual's attempt to cope with the environment which is composed of patterns of expectations for the behavior consistent with his or her own pattern of needs (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Interestingly, the role of a teacher follows the same theory in that role and personality factors determine the behavior as they vary according to the role and the personality of those involved, specifically, the role and personality of parents (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

At times, administration must intervene when teachers and parents are involved and find ways to integrate the demands of the institution with the demands of the staff to create an organizationally-productive and fulfilling institution (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Within the Getzels-Guba (1957) framework, one issue arises when conflicting personalities and opposing needs dispositions occur. Getzels and Guba (1957) supported the idea that a teacher is a specialist in his or her field who has been trained and developed to act with competence; however, many times a teacher's professional standings as an expert are challenged by the community. The Getzels-Guba (1957) study sought to determine the nature of the expectations attached to the teacher role, the extent of the conflict, and the different effects of such conflict in certain personal and social characteristics. Theoretically, the socio-behavior theory applied to institutions found that one variable, "rationality," represents the extent to which expectations are placed upon the teacher's role that are logically appropriate to the achievement of the

institutional goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957). If the expectations of the teacher's role have little relation between what is expected and the goals of the institution, there is a chance that the teacher will have low morale (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

Bakhtin's Dialogism

Communication between parents and teachers is an area where both participants take on a role that may or may not raise morale of teachers dependent on the construction of meaning as theorized by Bakhtin (1986). Bakhtin's research is so varied that it is hard to contain his theories in one domain where he develops the same idea many times over to enrich a multitude of fields (Aggarwal, 2015). For example, education and classroom-related implications can be examined to transform language in education as "monologic, singular, and authoritative to a space that is dialogic, democratic, multifaceted and ever-evolving field" (Aggarwal, 2015, p. 88). Bakhtin rejected the idea that truth was singular, disconnected statements but rather a number of statements that came to interaction via carriers in the course of a shared event (Sidorkin, 2002). Thus, explaining the need for constant communication between various carriers in the same event of classroom experiences. Discussion and communication stems from internally persuasive discourse which Bakhtin believed is ultimately what each person thinks for himself or herself (Freedman & Ball, 2004). In order to arrive at understanding in communication, tension is required through social interactions as well as conflict among different speakers (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Bakhtin (1986) found that there are other levels of participation in construction of meaning beyond what one normally observes. Furthermore, if one interpretation exists, then there are other interpretations that exist as well, which can be applied to parent and teacher interpretations in change communication (Bakhtin, 1986; Jabri, Adrian, & Boje, 2008). Meaning

is not static; it is a continual process where meaning continues to be discovered as interaction endures (Bakhtin, 1986; Jabri et al., 2008). Reality is shaped and re-shaped by what others say adding to the Getzels-Guba belongingness and rationality variables of the needs-goals congruence (Bakhtin, 1986; Getzels & Guba, 1957). Participation in this continual process does not necessarily mean arriving at meaning but is a continuous discovery of meaning throughout prolonged interaction (Jabri et al., 2008). Among parents and teachers, interpretation can become an unresolved problem; therefore, Bakhtin (1986) suggested desiring a surplus of polyphony rather than a single monophonic vision (Jabri et al., 2008). The interpretation dilemma during some parent and teacher involvement can best be solved by adhering to ethical behavior in communicating by doing one's best to interpret the other's words accurately where there is little ambiguity for the receiver to take advantage of the ambiguity (Bakhtin, 1986).

Bakhtin (1986) built his communication theory on insight that is denied until it is communicated to another. When persons communicate, interpret, and respond then there is the possibility for illumination and insight. Many researchers such as Aggarwal (2015), Berkenkotter and Huckin (2016), and Marchenkova (2005) likened Bakhtin's idea of communication and interpretation to Vygotsky theories of thought and speech (Emerson, 1983; Shotter, 1993; Stetsenko, 2007; Wertsch, 1990). The difference with Bakhtin and the use of his theory in the current study rather than Vygotsky's is that Bakhtin's theory of dialogism "provides space for the retention of differences in voices in discourses more than the Vygotskian notion of social interaction" (Aggarwal, 2015, pp. 94-95).

Research has shown that communication between parents and teachers is a significant component of parent-teacher partnerships and offers voices from various discourses (Bakhtin, 1986; Bokony, Whiteside-Mansell, & Swindle, 2013a). Both contributors have information to

gain through reciprocal, on-going, and balanced communication such as parents having unique knowledge of their children and teachers having access to resources that may not be known to families (Bokony et al., 2013a; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Communication is key to positive relationships between home and school; however, very little is known if the conversations are truly meaningful through Bakhtin's (1986) theory of dialogism where retention of various voices in discourse is critical to accurate communication (Aggarwal, 2015; Bokony et al., 2013a; McGrath, 2007).

Related Literature

The review of the literature will begin with an examination of the historical context of parental involvement. Studies are also provided that examine the pivotal role parents play in effective parent involvement in school academics as well as parent involvement influence on students' overall grades, attitudes, behavior, and attendance (Christenson et al., 1997; Loera et al., 2011). The review of literature begins with a broad scope of the parent involvement topic and moves to a more specific investigation in current literature including barriers to academic parent involvement, parents' and teachers' experiences with parent involvement, as well as teacher preparation to engage parents in their students' academics. The literature review concludes with an exploration of parent involvement in schools with a large percentage of families with low socioeconomic status (SES) or schools that have been categorized as "failing," "reconstituted," or "turnaround" schools.

History of Parental Involvement

Traditionally, parent involvement has included such activities as parent attendance at school-wide functions, assisting students with academic work in the home, communicating with teachers, participating in parent-teacher meetings, attending face-to-face parent-teacher

meetings, and volunteering in the classroom with the teacher (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). In a study conducted by Dotterer and Wehrspann (2015), parents were often considered as a supporting role to teachers in 95% of parent surveys for academic involvement. Current research has found that in the home, parent involvement in school, and specifically literacy can influence a child's outlook on reading for leisure and testing scores (Bonci, 2011). Rather than act as change agents who have the power to transform schools, parents act in roles that avoid issues of power and provide a passive role in the school culture (Evans & Radina, 2014). Many of the involvement activities rely heavily on communication with the classroom teacher to work cooperatively with one another (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012).

Various policies at the federal, state, and local levels emphasize the role that parents play in early childhood schooling and programs to standardize and enforce parents' involvement in student brain development (Hilado, Kallemeyn, & Phillips, 2013). Research supports the need for policies such as the Family Engagement in Education Act of 2011 which is a federal level policy that seeks parent involvement from families and schools from a child's birth through young adulthood (Hilado et al., 2013). Some states are also creating standards such as Illinois' Birth to Three Program Standards that hold parents responsible as stakeholders involved in school leadership and decision-making (Illinois State Board of Education, 2002).

Research has been conducted in the area of child motivation based on parent involvement to support the steps taken by federal, state, and local policymakers. For example, parent-oriented motivations in school with extrinsic motivations are a substantial part of children's motivations (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Various studies have supported the idea that children are motivated in school based on parents' expectations such as avoiding punishment and receiving rewards from their parents (Carlson & Berger, 2013; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Current

studies seek to find answers to questions such as, do parents' involvement raise children's parent-oriented motivation, does their motivation facilitate engagement and achievement, and does culture matter (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012)? Since the mandate of parental involvement, other studies have been conducted on the topic including determining whether socioeconomic status is linked to academic achievement of students with academically-involved parents (Altschul, 2012). Research has found that irrespective of parents' SES, a parent's attitude and support towards learning influenced students' performance on literacy tests, showing that socioeconomic status does not necessarily determine a student's education ability (Bonci, 2011).

The need for such current studies in parent involvement is due to the ever-changing family structures and trends of childrearing (Carlson & Berger, 2013). Parent involvement is not a stagnant activity, and the manner of involvement changes from family to family depending on time, money, and situation (Carlson & Berger, 2013; Hilado et al., 2013). Family demographers contribute to the wealth of knowledge as family functions change and parent-child activities evolve (Carlson & Berger, 2013). The difference in parental involvement fluctuates between resident social, biological, or nonresident fathers and mothers, but parent investment stays consistent over time with maternal engagement (Carlson & Berger, 2013; Davidovitch & Yavich, 2015).

Not only have studies explored academic achievement, motivation, and forms of involvement but parent involvement has also been investigated in various grade levels including elementary, middle, and high school; it has especially included middle school where student transition and behavior is concerned (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015). The history of parent involvement spans many diverse environments and cultures, but parent involvement would not

be as structured and mandated as it is currently without programs such as Title I, Family Engagement in Education act of 2011, and NCLB (Hilado et al., 2013).

Parent Involvement in No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds Act Title I Programs

Policymakers who developed NCLB as well as the ESSA attempted to capture both American ideas of equity and efficiency, yet research has shown that only one can be attained at a time (Aske, Connolly, & Corman, 2013). Adversely, it is still important for parents as stakeholders to confront the dilemma and balance their efforts accordingly (Aske et al., 2013). Title I is a program that has attempted to establish systematic parent involvement in academics for families in low SES locations. The United States legislators passed the ESEA in 1994 which addressed parental involvement mandates that had previously been unaddressed for federal funding (Evans & Radina, 2014). Many schools choose to focus on parent-home communication because there are many forms of parent involvement (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015). Title I legislation requires schools that receive Title I federal funds to implement practices that will engage low-income families and will develop compacts for school-family partnerships (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015; Evans & Radina, 2014). Engaging low-income families is one emphasis of Title I allocations since the barriers of parent involvement for this subgroup abound (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015). Unfortunately, many times a lack of trust exists due to negative experiences during parents' time in school; therefore, one goal of Title I is to increase the trust of parents and make parent-school communication and involvement positive again (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Home-school communication was a primary focus on studies where administrators sought to address the low levels of engagement of parents and school (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015).

More than 10 years since NCLB was created and ESSA took its place, many parents are still not satisfied with the services meant to prevent students from slipping through the cracks in the educational system (Lavery, 2015). Over half of the nation's schools fail to meet their states' AYP standards, and a third of the schools have been identified for improvement based on their repeated failure to meet target scores and progress (Lavery, 2015). Many parents and families have not taken advantage of the opportunities such as Title I services including school choice and tutoring services at schools with a high poverty student population (Lavery, 2015). Reaching out to parents to inform them of the program opportunities is necessary when studies show parents have a lack of knowledge regarding NCLB program benefits (Lavery, 2015).

In a study conducted by Lavery (2015), parents of students in 56 public elementary schools in Seattle, Washington were invited to participate in a survey regarding their attitudes towards schools, education policy, and government. Since Title I is a small portion of NCLB and ESSA, it was important to understand the depth and distribution of parents' understanding of NCLB which is responsible for structuring the educational experiences of 50 million schools, children, and families (Lavery, 2015). Interestingly, one of the most important findings was that while most parents claim familiarity with NCLB and ESSA, few parents understand how certain provisions interact with their child's school context and provide opportunities for the students such as Title I (Lavery, 2015). Demographics also played a large role in the study where some parents interviewed had little knowledge of Title I schools due to their lack of children who attended a School Identified for Improvement (SIFI) school where a significant number of high poverty students must be registered (Lavery, 2015).

Parents must be involved in the public-school environment for them to understand the effect of Title I and its ability to create a bridge between home and school (Whitaker &

Dempsey, 2013). In Whitaker and Dempsey's (2013) study, the researchers grounded their research in role theory which suggests that roles are socially constructed and correspond with varied positions in social contexts (Biddel, 1986). Participants of the study came from middle schools in a large metropolitan area including three Title I schools since the focus was on parents' role beliefs in schools with low-income families (Whitaker & Dempsey, 2013). The researchers found that the actions schools take to encourage parents to involve themselves in schools also work to encourage positive parental beliefs about how parents can support their child's learning (Whitaker & Dempsey, 2013).

Parent Involvement Programs and Technology

Various methods have been used to integrate technology and structured programs for parent involvement including websites, online newsletters, DVDs, and communication programs for ESL families (DeBaryshe, Kim, Davidson, & Gorecki, 2013; Walsh, Cromer, & Weigel, 2014). In addition to engaging parents in technology, such as a DVD classroom newsletter, children are also engaged and have a positive experience with the classroom newsletters, proving that they are interesting enough to capture children's interests as well (Walsh et al., 2014). Not only does a DVD newsletter method of in-home parent involvement keep parents informed of school activities, but it also enhances children's self-awareness and self-esteem while watching themselves, classmates, and teachers (Walsh et al., 2014). The audio-visual technique of parent-teacher communication allowed for opportunities of meaningful conversations at home as well as in the classroom (Walsh et al., 2014).

Information technology is constantly improving, and beyond audio-visual newsletters is the ability for teachers and parents to communicate and interact over the phone replacing the traditional paper note method (Ho, Hung, & Chen, 2012). One of the most influential findings

from a study conducted by Ho et al. (2012) is that technology use does not imply perceived usefulness or perceived ease of the technology, but rather attitude influences the behavior intention directly. Positive attitudes toward the system is fostered by positive attitudes and communication training of the users when utilizing a phone messaging system to increase parent awareness and involvement in classroom events (Ho et al., 2012). When communicating through text message or school-appropriate social media platforms, communication methods require adequate training for teachers to understand the usefulness of the communication system to ensure their positive attitude towards the system as well (Ho et al., 2012).

In homes where the Internet and technology are available, parents can easily stay in contact with teachers as well as check updates on attendance, grades, and homework (Davidovitch & Yavich, 2015). Although the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, one downside to the incorporation of technological forms of parent involvement is that many low-income families lack access to the resources such as a computer and Internet service (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Technological proficiency also raised concerns for parents, yet it was cited as an important factor for increasing parents' interests in helping their children (Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

Other programs have been used to involve parents in the home so that the values, expectations, and practices in both home and school are similar (DeBaryshe et al., 2013). Integrating a second curriculum with lessons and objectives for the home allows parents to stay connected and involved with what students are learning in the classroom (DeBaryshe et al., 2013). Support needs to be clear and lessons to be short to engage family involvement in the home curriculum (DeBaryshe et al., 2013). For families that were not comfortable "teaching,"

an organized program with video coaching demonstrations provides structure to parents who become increasingly efficacious through the home curriculum (DeBaryshe et al., 2013).

Intervention programs for families in low SES areas can also increase communication between parents and teachers in contrast to low SES areas without a strategic plan for improved communication (Bokony et al., 2013a). Intervention methods serve various functions including increasing continuity of communication, improving parents' perceptions of teachers, and increasing parents' access to information and resources (Bokony et al., 2013a). One unintended outcome that is both positive for schools and families is that when communication is positive for parents and teachers, parents are more likely to ask for help with a family problem, and teachers are more open to giving parenting information (Bokony et al., 2013a).

Forms of Academic Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been a confused concept between parents and schools for many years (LaBahn, 1995). Two concepts must work hand-in-hand for parent involvement to be successful; the first is a level of commitment to parent support, and the second is a level of parental activity and participation that is observable (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992). In addition to the two concepts, parents and teachers must keep in mind that parent involvement can be reactive or proactive (Olmstead, 2013). Many forms of parental involvement exist including parent involvement through homework interaction (Dumont, Trautwein, Nagy, & Nagengast, 2014). Although parent education levels range from some formal schooling to a master's or doctoral degree, education and SES did not affect the structure, control, or responsiveness of parent involvement (Dumont et al., 2014; Garbacz et al., 2015).

Parenting in the home, as suggested by teachers using a training program, communicated to families is considered a less time and cost intensive approach to building bonds between the

school and family (Dumont et al., 2014; Harris & Goodall, 2008). It is important for the development of good learning habits and behavior to have teachers communicate with parents the importance of homework and strategies to involve themselves in their students' homework process (Dumont et al., 2014). This also helps build familial bonds between parent and child (Dumont et al., 2014).

Increasing the lines of communication between school and family can also increase family engagement and a child's school readiness and success (Bokony et al., 2013b). Ranging from brief, small talk occurring at drop-off or pick-up times to conferences scheduled for after school hours, parents and teachers must strive for reciprocal, on-going, and balanced partnerships (Bokony et al., 2013b). When parents become involved outside of the classroom, for example in the home, homework can become a time to help students master the information rather than overall performance and social comparison (Gornida & Cortina, 2014; Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2013). During homework time, parents can "substantiate their mastery beliefs and goals into practice 'in front of their child's eyes' which, in turn, predict the adoption of mastery goals by the child her/himself" (Gornida & Cortina, 2014, p. 389). Parents will also more likely relieve some of the control they feel and encourage cognitive engagement in the home and in school as well (Gornida & Cortina, 2014).

Parental involvement can take on different forms from involvement of parents with homework completion to parents simply communicating socially and culturally with their children in the home (Hampden-Thompson et al., 2013). Increasing communication between teachers and parents then onto their children regarding school lessons, assignments, and homework in the home is associated with increased social and cultural communication leading to higher levels of student literacy (Hampden-Thompson et al., 2013). Five themes of parent

involvement emerged in Selamawit's (2014) study in regards to families from other countries and students who consider English as a second language. The five encouraging themes included homework, teachers' sensitivity towards the child's education, teachers' respect for the family, parents' ability to communicate with teachers, and parents' high regard for education (Selamawit, 2014, p. 300).

From a teacher's perspective, parents who participated in the study believed that parents who ask about their child's performance on particular days motivate the teachers to do more for the kids and makes them happy to continue working with the children inspiring a positive outlook about the parents in general (Selamawit, 2014). Setting up conferences as well as sending in notes are also ways that motivate teachers to work hard for the children in the school when they know that the parents are invested in the education of their child (Selamawit, 2014).

Benefits of Parental Involvement in Academics

Various studies have researched the effects of Head Start Programs to predict to what extent parent involvement predicts change in parent and child outcomes over time to determine the specific benefits of parental involvement in academics (Ansari & Gershoff, 2015; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Head Start is a program of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provides early childhood education of children three to four years including health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to families that are considered low-income (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). Students who perceive that their parents are involved in school academics also experience parents as placing more value on school achievement which is predictive of students placing more value on school achievement on their own over time (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015). Once students personally understand the importance of school

achievement, they also become more open to parent instruction and competency development as well as experience a rise in confidence levels (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015).

Research has shown that once a child falls behind in academics, he or she most likely will stay behind (Ansari & Gershoff, 2015; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Therefore, research has centered on Head Start students such as Ansari's and Gershoff's (2015) study answering whether parent involvement in Head Start predicts changes in parenting practices over time, and if so, what are the observed changes between parent involvement and gains in children's academic achievement and behavioral skills (Ansari & Gershoff, 2015). Although, in the study, quantifiable results did not directly show that involvement directly supported children's learning; instead, it improved parenting methods and increased cognitive stimulation which is associated with gains in academic skills overall (Ansari & Gershoff, 2015; Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010). This may be true that the parent is most influential with younger students; however, certain subjects, such as literacy, continually need to be supported by parents through the middle and high school years as well (Bonci, 2011).

This current research is much like previous studies where the majority of research has found a larger effect of parental involvement on student behavior than on academic outcomes in the upper grade levels (Avvisati, Gurgand, Guyon, & Maurin, 2014; Monti, Pomerantz, & Roisman, 2014; Neymotin, 2014). As students move to the upper grade levels, parent involvement takes a different shape and includes less school involvement and more decision-making involvement such as what college to attend and how to partake in social peer groups (Neymotin, 2014). This can move towards a more extreme lack of parenting called insensitive parenting which includes unresponsiveness, hostility, and intrusiveness early in a child's schooling that can predict a student's academic function in later grades (Monti et al., 2014).

Insensitive parenting through elementary school “was evident in deficits in children’s classroom engagement and performance on standardized achievement test at the end of elementary school” (Monti et al., 2014, p. 866).

In addition to early education, the benefits of parental involvement have also been studied in various cultures in the United States (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Loera et al., 2011). The need for such studies derives from previous studies that explain how low-income schools in culturally and ethnically diverse areas address barriers to learning but focus on the enhancement of parent engagement (Berliner, 2006; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012). Parent engagement programs are based on previous research supporting the idea that parent engagement in school activities strongly affects children’s academic achievement even if the parents are of a different ethnicity and social class (Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2012; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012).

Utilizing Bronfenbrenner’s (2006) ecological context, studies explore the process by which academic achievement could be affected by parent involvement and supported by the school culture (McNeal, 2015). Using a hierarchical regression model in the McNeal (2015) research, outcomes “showed moderate support... that parent involvement significantly influenced academic achievement” (p. 160). School social context is essential to determining how parent involvement functions across schools to create parent involvement (McNeal, 2015). Academically, parent involvement is auxiliary to a school’s initial curriculum but also increases student achievement and attendance (Stitt & Brooks, 2014).

Research has compared the learning environments for parental involvement to determine the academic benefits (Adamski, Fraser, & Peiro, 2013). In terms of students’ attitudes toward specific courses, such as Spanish, the home environment is more influential; however, the classroom environment is more influential in terms of overall achievement (Adamski et al.,

2013). In addition to parental involvement influencing attitudes toward classes, classroom environment perceptions were also greater for those students who had parents who were more involved in education and the school (Adamski et al., 2013).

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Parental involvement ranging from general education students to students with disabilities has undergone research to determine the barriers to parent involvement. One such body of research identified students diagnosed with ADHD specifically (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). Research shows the need for high-quality parent-teacher relationship development for students with ADHD; unfortunately, substantial barriers exist (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). In Gwernan-Jones et al.'s (2015) study, positive relationships were powerful in the ability to solve school difficulties for the student; however, these relationships were considered the exception where many relationships were negative. Furthermore, mothers recounted that most of their relationships surrounded conflict and unresolved difficulties with teachers, and when they attempted to intervene through escalation, their resistance was ineffective (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). Some typical barriers that tend to cause dissonance between teachers and parents include cultural differences and socioeconomic status; however, in the case of students with ADHD, parent-teacher conflict was experienced by both middle and working-class mothers (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012).

Cultural differences can create barriers to parent-teacher communication and parent involvement from both the parent and teacher perspectives. Six themes were identified in Selamawit's (2014) research as barriers to parent involvement "including: language and parental education; teacher's attitude; respect for authority figure; special education interventions

(Parents' Views); language and parental resistance to teachers' recommendation of special educational intervention (Teachers' Views)" (p. 300).

Students undergoing transition between grades and schools also require parent involvement; however, educators believe that parent involvement must be initiated by the parents and has become a passive action (Landmark, Roberts, & Zhang, 2012). Rather, parent involvement should be a planned activity and the perceptions of the amount of planning going into parent involvement are highly important (Landmark et al., 2012). Parents who perceived a lack of planning or forethought for parental involvement viewed this as a barrier to feeling welcomed in their child's academics (Hilado et al., 2013; Landmark et al., 2012).

Many times, parents are also reluctant to involve themselves because of factors outside of their control such as other students who are behavior issues (Murray et al., 2014). When parents perceive invitations to come to school solely based on their child's negative behavior or other children's behaviors, they are less likely to engage at all (Murray et al., 2014). In Murray et al.'s (2014) study, approximately half of the parents interviewed indicated a negative impression of the teachers and a general hostility towards them from the teachers, which demotivated them from being involved in everyday events in the school.

Parents who check in too often on their students using email or online gradebook access can begin to create a barrier to academic success not just with their child but with their child's teacher as well (McNeal, 2012). Technology plays an important role in either fostering parent-teacher relationships or neglecting those relationships due to parental beliefs influenced by teacher-parent communication (Olmstead, 2013). Using technology can break down a barrier for parents who are not able to attend school functions due to work commitments or other family commitments (Olmstead, 2013). When "teachers take actions to cultivate instructional

partnerships with parents, those parents are more likely to support their children's learning at home...and are more likely to be perceived by the teachers as positively involved" (Olmstead, 2013, p. 29). Subsequently, when asked, teachers and parents agreed that the greatest barrier to parent involvement in school was a busy schedule, and Hispanic parents stated that language and not feeling welcomed at school were barriers for them in addition to scheduling difficulties (Olmstead, 2013).

Scheduling difficulties can also arise with older students (Choi, Chang, Kim, & Reio, 2015). Many times, parents are more strongly involved when their child is preschool or elementary age, but parent involvement decreases as students move up in grade level and interests change (Choi et al., 2015). Less time is spent in the school environment, and parent involvement becomes more important in the home (Choi et al., 2015). Student age and interests create a barrier for parents who wish to be more involved in their student's academics. Unfortunately, the older the students, the more covert and home-based parent involvement must become (Choi et al., 2015). For older students in the middle school levels, parental involvement in advising has more of a direct effect on a student's subject performance or efficacy; whereas, in high school levels, parental involvement in school has no significant effect on subject efficacy or achievement (Choi et al., 2015).

Parent Experience

One such form of parent involvement is parent-teacher dialogue and interaction (Palts & Haro-Loit, 2015). Dialogue in this study refers to the conversational mode between a teacher and a parent allowing for their positive or negative attitude of parents concerning information and interaction with a classroom teacher (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). Previous research has shown that parent involvement in the primary grades, such as helping with homework, can

positively influence student achievement; whereas, in middle grades help with homework negatively influences student abilities (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012). Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) expanded that research to determine which communication patterns would enable teachers to communicate efficiently with parents to create positive parent experiences with parental involvement through dialogue.

Parent-teacher conferences are one of the most common forms of direct communication and parent involvement methods (Lemmer, 2012). When parents were asked to describe their experiences of parent-teacher dialogue through conferences, they did so with modest expectations including to find out about how they were doing, how they could assist at home, and to share their own insights (Lemmer, 2012). Parent participants in Lemmer's (2012) study stated that when they did decide to discuss matters beyond their child including matters of dissatisfaction with teacher or the curriculum, teachers became defensive and unapproachable (Andersson, Miniscalco, & Gillberg, 2014). Parents of students who are doing well or satisfactorily are often brushed off or met with briefly even when parents express their desire to speak with the teacher (Lemmer, 2012). Brief conferences are also experienced by parents on the other end of the spectrum with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who have been instructed to "wait and see" by the teachers when parents first express concern (Andersson et al., 2014).

At times, a perceived power differential can shut down avenues of parent-teacher communication stemming from cultural beliefs and inequities in authority and education (Bokony et al., 2013a). Latino parents in school districts reveal that they recognize power differentials between the immigrant families and the school personnel during important school meetings where predetermined agendas are utilized, and no translations are offered (Jasis &

Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012). In some cases, immigrant families intend to challenge the power gap by equalizing their interactions with school stakeholders to ensure a fair voice (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012).

Latino parents exhibit the desire to engage in their children's education; unfortunately, the parents are not sure how to fulfill that role to enhance student achievement and overall school academic status (Altschul, 2012). SES is an economic and sociological measure of an individual or family economic and social position when related to others; this measure is based on income, education, and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2016). A strong link has been found between SES and achievement where investing in a parent's human and social capital can be an intervention strategy that has been proven to improve youth's achievement (Altschul, 2012). Public opinion reports show that while NCLB was created to only monitor achievement in schools, this label has an unintended consequence beyond monitoring student and school progress (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014).

In the younger grades where parent and teacher communication is necessary, most communication in childcare situations tends to be infrequent, brief, and not substantive due to parents not wanting to share family information with childcare workers (Bokony et al., 2013a). Parent experiences can be increased through the use of communication programs striving to "improve parents' perceptions of teachers as a resource for child development and childrearing information" (Bokony et al., 2013a, p. 59). Parents usually become more aggravated when school personnel do not respond to parent initiations or when a call, email, or note is not quickly acknowledged which can be interpreted as dismissive and disinterested (Elbaum, Blatz, & Rodriguez, 2016). Parents who speak unfavorably about a school's communication methods mention that the school was rigid about providing services or reciprocating parents' initial

contact (Rodriguez et al., 2014). For those parents who spoke positively about the theme of varying communication methods, those parents cited accessible teachers, alternative methods of communication, and that a person was on staff who could answer questions and accommodate parents during special education meetings (Rodriguez et al., 2014).

In American culture, the educational system is hierarchical and places very little reward on vocational skills and more reward on achieving higher credentials or degrees (Blair, 2014). With American families and parents, support such as helping with schoolwork and attending events yields positive benefits for children's grades; whereas, in other cultures, grades are not affected by such actions (Blair, 2014). For families living in public housing and where parents had dropped out of school or earned only a high school diploma, parents find that jumping through hoops to assert themselves or make changes only causes frustration and hopelessness (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). The low-income families feel that they could overcome the barriers placed in front of them until they begin to feel marginalized by the school community and society which causes them to withdraw from engaging in the education system (Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

Research on parents' experiences dealing with various forms of communication methods has also been investigated and their perceptions have been studied (Palts & Kalmus, 2015). Through the use of digital communication, a greater opportunity for dialogic communication is available. Because schedules are another barrier to parent involvement, parents have an easier time communicating through technology (Palts & Kalmus, 2015). In Palts' and Kalmus' (2015) study on parents' experiences of staying involved in their children's education, both teachers and parents cited the phone as a communication preference. However, where teachers found email to be the fastest and most effective way to communicate with parents, parents found email and

technology in general to cause insecurities stemming from earlier, negative experiences and inadequate skills (Palts & Kalmus, 2015).

Teacher Experience

Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement take many shapes depending on the resources the school has to offer (Christianakis, 2011). Informing parents about school events and student information, such as grades and behavior, enables volunteering and assistance to teachers (Dor, 2012). In addition to staying informed, teachers also note that informing parents improves school reputation and academic outcomes as well (Dor, 2012). However, in some schools with crowded classrooms, it is difficult for teachers to reach out to all parents at all times, and some teachers find that there are incidents where parents create situations putting teachers in unpleasant positions (Dor, 2012).

Teachers in under-resourced schools find that parents who contribute materials and classroom staples to be more involved; whereas, in schools with materials already provided, parent involvement is considered by teachers to be phone calls and parent availability (Christianakis, 2011). When interviewed, all 15 teachers in Christianakis' (2011) study found that "proactive communication on the part of the parent and availability both on the campus and via the phone helped relieve teachers of the responsibility to maintain home communication" (p. 166). Not only did the parents' proactive communication relieve teachers of stress, but actual time spent in the classroom helping with small groups or one-on-one tutoring was perceived by teachers to be extremely helpful (Christianakis, 2011).

Leaders all benefit from increased parent involvement in under-resourced schools and urban schools (Watson & Bogotch, 2015). Watson and Bogotch's (2015) research attempted to identify the challenges to parent involvement and determine how teachers and administrators

experience and consider those challenges in urban schools. Linked to critical race theory and community cultural wealth were six types of assets believed to be lacking in students of color (Bell, 1980; Watson & Bogotch, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Teachers and administrators were interviewed in order for the researchers to “deconstruct and reframe perceived challenges to parent involvement to untapped advantages” (Watson & Bogotch, 2015, p. 259). Specifically, the researchers found from teachers’ experiences that parent involvement should begin with the teachers and administrators initiating communication with parents. At times, there were community cultural wealth assets that were viewed as disadvantages to teachers and administrators, such as: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital (Watson & Bogotch, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Aspirational capital is defined as the hopes and dreams educators have, linguistic capital refers to the language and communication skills that teachers bring to the environment, and familial capital is the social and personal human resources used by teachers (Yosso, 2005). Social capital is defined by Yosso (2015) as the contacts teachers have and how they utilize them in the educational environment, navigational capital is the ability to navigate through social and educational institutions, and resistant capital has a foundation in equal rights and collective freedom. Although teachers and administrators view each of the categories as having a negative influence on student achievement, there are hidden strengths that can be found in each if “teachers and administrators reframe their concept of parent involvement” (Watson & Bogotch, 2015, p. 273). For example, the theme of aspirational capital including low SES families can be reframed as a chance to offer technology workshops on weekends (Watson & Bogotch, 2015). In the case of social capital, students and parents can be encouraged to participate in tutoring programs in the school community or encouraged to serve as mentors for other students or

parents in the community (Watson & Bogotch, 2015). Parents can become involved in their children's education in various ways, but it is necessary that teachers and school leaders look past the perceived weaknesses of a school community and work to reframe their views and create ways to turn weaknesses into strengths (Watson & Bogotch, 2015). Therefore, teachers can reframe their perceived experiences of parent involvement in urban schools to create opportunities for growth in school achievement and parent involvement.

Teachers in some schools have tried to turn their weaknesses into strengths by creating avenues for parent involvement through educational management. Zohora, Othman, Hoque, Daud, and Ab Samad (2013) found that 60% of teachers believe that engaged parents who help plan school activities are more valued and will work with the school to achieve school goals. Getzels and Guba (1957) found that a sense of ownership occurs as a result of participation and furthermore leads to the desired commitment and motivation of the school or organization members and teachers. Teachers who observe this form of communication and commitment to ownership increase organizational effectiveness (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004). However, an unstable school environment can occur when parents are given more administrative input on such factors as staffing and daily school decisions (Zohora et al., 2013).

During parent-teacher communication such as face-to-face conferences, teachers have experienced parents whose status as a "good parent" is threatened by suggesting a lack of knowledge or competence (Pillet-Shore, 2015). Teachers observed that parents feel pressure to portray a "good parent" persona during conferencing for fear that the teacher will treat them as solely responsible for any trouble with the student (Pillet-Shore, 2015). In a study conducted at Swedish preschools, parent-teacher conferences were studied to determine how parents can take control to overcome barriers to parent involvement (Markstrom, 2011). In order for teachers to

have a more positive and fruitful conference experience, the teachers created “strength cards” that listed specific characteristic behaviors and qualities of each student so that parents could categorize and label their own child based on his or her strengths on the cards (Markstrom, 2011). Not only did this provide a specific artifact for parents, but it allowed the talk to focus on the cards and not directed toward the individual child (Markstrom, 2011).

It is paramount that teachers evaluate their parent communication and engagement competency (Gartmeier, Gebhardt, & Dotger, 2016). Although telephone and email communication are the methods of choice for teachers, many teachers find email to be extremely time consuming to find the best wordage to ensure that information is not misunderstood or misconstrued (Palts & Kalmus, 2015). Evaluating such feelings and preconceived ideas can also help create confidence; whereas, teachers with low confidence in their parent-communication competencies also have deficits in communication behaviors relating to solving problems, making concrete agreements, and paying less attention to understanding parents correctly (Gartmeier et al., 2016).

The need to problem solve without appearing to create a shortcut strategy and still suggest solutions quickly is necessary for teachers to be competent communicators (Gartmeier et al., 2016). A competent communicator when it comes to student behavior, academics, or parent engagement “does not only mean being able to establish a good interpersonal relationship with parents and to develop realistic perspectives for how to solve existing problems—it also means reaching these goals within a rather narrow timeframe” (Gartmeier et al., 2016, p. 214).

Teacher Preparation for Parental Involvement

Teacher preparation through proactive training, such as preservice instruction as well as in-service professional development, can help teachers feel more prepared to work with parents

(Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeltd, 2012). Regardless of teachers' level of experience or formal education, professional development leads to a feeling of higher efficacy and lower burnout (Pas et al., 2012). The first indispensable method for teachers to develop a partnership with parents is through teacher training in communication and active listening skills (Symeau, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012). Collaborating with parents varies from one to another and "communication skills equip teachers to recognize the diversity of the parent body and thus address the ineffectiveness of using an undifferentiated approach with all parents" (Symeau et al., 2012, p. 80). Training on communication and counseling skills helps teachers become more aware of their professional image by understanding their professional space and boundaries with parents (Symeau et al., 2012).

Building the confidence for preservice teachers to work with parents as collaborators in their children's education was researched by Bofferding, Hoffman, and Kastberg (2016) who utilized family mathematics nights to model effective engagement between teachers and parents. Professors and school administrators sought to expand their engagement beyond what was read in a text or a journal article to resolve the negative perceptions preservice teachers had about working with parents during a methods course (Bofferding et al., 2016). After the preservice teachers were exposed to working with parents, the participants indicated that they were less nervous and more confident about working alongside parents in the future (Bofferding et al., 2016). Not surprisingly, the teachers even found that parents really do want to help their children and are excited to watch them learn outside of the classroom (Bofferding et al., 2016). As a result, some of the preservice teachers, through the use of real-life interaction, stated that

they were so inspired that they would want to incorporate parents in their future classrooms more than ever (Bofferding et al., 2016).

Not only do preservice teachers need to feel comfortable interacting with parents in general but preservice teachers should also be able to engage with parents from diverse backgrounds and cultures (Ramirez, McCollough, & Diaz, 2016). This is especially important when one of the strongest predictors of schools' success for English language learners is their parental involvement (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Previous studies have shown language acts as a barrier between parents and teachers and can limit the amount of parent involvement in their child's education (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Teachers used culturally-relevant math, such as determining the budget for a Quinceañera or estimating the amount of candies that could fit inside a piñata, to incorporate multi-cultural instruction (Ramirez et al., 2016). Not only did Latino parents' perceptions of mathematics increase from 50% to 86% by the end of the event, but preservice teachers' attitudes and apprehensions of working with multicultural families diminished and created more tools for teachers to use to be culturally responsive (Ramirez et al., 2016). This moment of genuine interactions with parents put working with Latino parents and home-school connections into perspective and created a model of acceptance and supportive environments (Ramirez et al., 2016).

Parental Involvement in Failing Schools

Based on a study conducted by Lavery (2015), research found that parents' opinions on schools differed according to a school's policy status. Not only did school parents harbor negative opinions on the school but they also provided negative evaluations of SIFI on educational experiences, policy reform, and sanctions more so than their higher performing public school counterparts (Lavery, 2015). In states such as California, the parent trigger law

allows parents to band together in low-performing schools to choose one of four turnaround models (Kelly, 2012). The four options and the trigger law are similar to reconstituted public schools in the state of Virginia; however, in California parents have the right to petition for the reconstitution options including: converting the existing school to a charter, replacing the principal and at least half of the teaching staff, keeping the school but firing the principal or closing the school and sending students to local, higher-performing schools (Kelly, 2012). Reconstituted schools and turnaround schools are said to create collaboration and partnerships due to the rebuilding nature; however, other research suggests that school staff becomes stigmatized and demoralized, and teachers who are retained even suffer from grief-induced guilt (Hamilton et al., 2014; Hess, 2003, p. 307)

Although NCLB, Race to the Top, and other school reforms were created to solve the disparity between low and high SES, schools are actually exacerbating the problem based on a study conducted in 2014 of prospective home buyers showing that families were more concerned with the “failure” label itself and not the nature or specifics of these “failures” (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014). Parents’ beliefs regarding a school as a whole are tainted before they even enroll students in the school, and the negative “failing” label alarms parents and paints the whole system as a failure, when in reality only a segment of the population may be struggling (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014). Prospective parents and current parents in the school community of a failing school are negatively affected in their neighborhoods that the NCLB law was designed to help (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014).

In a case study examining a turnaround school (a school that failed to meet AYP and continually improve based on state standards), the use of change theory was applied to address the use of negative language teachers used with students, parents, and other teachers (Reyes &

Garcia, 2014). Establishing rapport and trust with parents and giving them power to connect with other parents and build a parent organization were other methods employed at this turnaround school to increase parent involvement (Reyes & Garcia, 2014). Not only did the new principal focus on fostering a strong bilingual program but all communication that went home to parents and the community was written in Spanish and English, yet again breaking down barriers to parent involvement (Reyes & Garcia, 2014). A special parent center was created in the school to allow for a place for parents to come and interact with the administration and teachers; the failing school quickly opened its doors to welcome all family (Reyes & Garcia, 2014).

Not all failing and turnaround schools are as welcoming to parents and the community as the study conducted by Reyes and Garcia (2014) indicated. Some failing schools are known to community and parents to create barriers to family and parent involvement (Jefferson, 2015). In Jefferson's (2015) examination of one such turnaround school, an elementary policy created a challenge in which it "demonstrated a practice of restricting family member access to school space accomplished through practices of inviting family members to school" (p. 79). Although the policy stated parents were welcome to the school, parents were actually and effectively prohibited by the policy from visiting the school unless a member of the school invited them (Jefferson, 2015). Most times the members of the school would only invite parents of students who were compliant in behavior and academic practice (Jefferson, 2015). In addition to needing a teacher invite to visit the school, parents were also penalized when they did not engage in school space in accordance with district policies or when they attempted to organize community support for policy changes (Jefferson, 2015). Conversely, the policy did not enact penalties on teachers when they acted rude or attempted to control the flow of school information producing a dominant-subordinate power arrangement (Jefferson, 2015). Parent involvement, parent

involvement policies, and a school's negative reputation for allowing parent involvement from the community are main concerns for failing schools; although at first they may seem benign, they are one of the largest barriers and challenges for a failing or turn-around school (Jefferson, 2015; Marsh, Strunk, & Bush, 2013).

Marginalizing and creating barriers for a group of students and families can adversely affect a school's ability to meet AYP in addition to creating hostility to a school or school district (Jefferson, 2015; Marsh et al., 2013). Students with disabilities are one of the largest subgroup gaps in Virginia state standardized testing (VDOE, 2016).

Unfortunately, during the 2011-2012 school year, the national average of Indicator 8 was 66% of parents of children receiving special education services stated that schools were not facilitating their involvement to improve services and results for their children (Elbaum et al., 2016; Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2013). For parents with students with disabilities, parent involvement is centered on the effectiveness of services rather than the customer service toward the parent entering in a collaborative partnership.

Where school-aged students regardless of age, gender, culture, SES, and cognitive functioning ability are failing standardized achievement tests, not all hope is lost. Studies have shown that insensitive parenting when tracked can foreshadow academic problems later on but can be offset through sensitive parent involvement (Monti et al., 2014; Pomerantz, & Roisman, 2014). Also, a mother's insensitivity was able to predict low academic functioning among the child or children; however, this did not occur when parents' involvement was average or high (Monti et al., 2014). Luckily, insensitive parenting on children's academic functioning can be offset in later grades such as second through fifth with higher quality of parenting (Monti et al., 2014). One characteristic emerges from all forms of research studied throughout the topic of

parent involvement and school success: quality of parent involvement more so than quantity of parent involvement determines a student's engagement, and performance provides failing or probationary schools with the skills they need to be successful once again (Monti et al., 2014).

Summary

This chapter provided an examination of the Getzels-Guba socio-psychology in administration theory as it provides a theoretical framework for the basis of schools involving parents in a hierarchical setting (Getzels & Guba, 1957). This research is also grounded in Bakhtin's (1986) dialogic theory incorporating communication theory where a sender and a receiver both experience the messages differently and their social context brings meaning to the message.

The body of literature on the topic of parent involvement described the history, legislature, programs, forms of parent involvement, and academic effects. The literature review also included barriers and teacher experiences of parent involvement and concluded with literature regarding parent involvement at academically failing schools.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers with academic parental involvement at select elementary schools scoring below 70% on state assessments for at least four consecutive years in Virginia. This chapter describes the research design chosen and the rationale behind its selection. A description of the researcher's role is provided as well as the setting and participants of the study. Also included in the chapter is a description of data collection procedures, pictorial representations, interview questions, focus group interview, and data analysis methods. The individual interview questions were piloted with teachers for content validity while focus group interview topics were grounded in themes that arose during individual interviews. Finally, the development of trustworthiness and ethical considerations are provided.

Design

Husserl (1970) explored the idea of transcendental phenomenology to discover meanings and essences in knowledge between the real and non-real. His mathematical and philosophical background influenced the change he saw necessary when working with human issues and living subjects who do not react automatically to external stimuli (Lavery, 2003). Husserl believed that researchers should explore variables, responses, and the context of the subjects and their perception of what the stimuli mean (Lavery, 2003). This type of study hinges on the idea that "knowledge based on intuition and essence precedes empirical knowledge" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). The process of transcendental phenomenology involves blending together what is real and what is imagined from many possible meanings (Moustakas, 1994). The core processes of transcendental phenomenology include bracketing, transcendental-phenomenological reduction,

and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Finding stability when conducting transcendental phenomenological research lies within the ability to come to terms with a natural attitude and to find a way of getting the researcher out of the environment (Creswell, 2013; Glendinning, 2008).

The current study followed a qualitative phenomenological research design. Phenomenology aims to determine the meaning of an experience for an individual who has had the experience (Creswell, 2013). The individual descriptions were used to create general, universal meanings and the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Different from other disciplines, phenomenology does not try to make meanings from cultures, social groups, historical periods, mental types, or personal life history; instead, it attempts to clarify the meanings as people live them from their day-to-day lives (van Manen, 1990). A defining feature of phenomenology includes a phenomenon to be explored with a group of individuals (Creswell, 2013). In some forms of phenomenology, the researcher brackets out himself or herself while data is collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenology ends with a passage that describes and discusses the essence of the experience for the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology are two approaches of phenomenology that can be explored through research (Creswell, 2013). Hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger and van Manen suggests a balance between the topic of inquiry and the researcher's relation to the topic (Creswell, 2013). The overall focus of illuminating a life world or human experience is shared between both approaches; however, Heidegger viewed humans as concerned creatures with an uncertain fate in an alien world (Lavery, 2003). Heidegger, once a student of Husserl, broke from Husserl's teaching and rather than focusing on the understanding of beings, Heidegger focused on the mode of being human or the meaning of a human in the world (Lavery, 2003). This hermeneutic research method tends to be descriptive

as well as interpretive understanding “that the ‘facts’ of lived experiences are always already meaningful” (van Manen, 1990, p. 181). In education, hermeneutic phenomenology interprets a phenomenon in order to find significance in the situations and relations with children (van Manen, 1990). In this current study, hermeneutic phenomenology will not be employed due to the need to explore the lived experiences of teachers while not interpreting or influencing the experiences by the researcher but rather bracketing oneself out of the background or history of the study (Laverty, 2003). A hermeneutic approach does not lend itself well to removing oneself from the study especially when a researcher has experience in the field that is researched (Husserl, 1931; van Manen, 1990). Since I am a current elementary school teacher, it was imperative that the experiences of the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools were not tainted by my experiences employed at an elementary school (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas 1994). Also, a transcendental approach allowed me to explore the occurrence of parent involvement at a denied-accreditation rated school without the preconceived beliefs of how a denied-accreditation school is operated (Creswell, 2013).

This study fits the goal of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenological research because it sought to understand the phenomenon of common experiences of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers regarding parent involvement in denied-accreditation schools (Creswell, 2013).

Husserl’s most basic philosophical assumption was “that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness” (Patton, 2015, p. 116). Husserl sought to focus on the exploration of understanding beings or phenomena such as understanding what third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers attend to, perceive, recall, and think about in their world of education. The dualism that Husserl sought to eliminate between the mind and body allowed the participants of this study to continue the co-constituted dialogue

between themselves and the world and this conscious awareness is the foundation of their reality in education (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2015).

Furthermore, the focus of the research is placed in brackets with everything else set aside so that the process is only rooted in the topic and the question as developed by Husserl (Laverty, 2003). Bracketing or phenomenological reduction is the process of suspending judgment or beliefs in order to connect with essences and to see the phenomena clearly (Creswell, 2013; Laverty, 2003). The study took the form of a transcendental phenomenology through phenomenological reduction in order to omit my experiences as a teacher (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The process of bracketing includes exemplary intuition, imaginative variation, and synthesis to allow an inherent character of conscious experience to be understood (Klein & Westcott, 1994; Laverty, 2003; Osborne, 1994). While conducting interviews, I bracketed out my own experiences by journaling in a composition notebook prior to any interviews and focus group interview as well as during data analysis (see Appendix A for journal entries).

The extent to which I bracketed was determined by the need to bring rigor and transparency to the study (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Prior to starting the study, I wrote my initial thoughts and beliefs on my topic before solidifying a topic or title for the study in a composition notebook. Revisiting what I knew or thought I knew of the topic ensured that my feelings and knowledge did not override those of the participants (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Also, journaling during the composition of my literature review ensured that I did not specifically phrase research questions or analyze data for themes I knew had already been found in the literature (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). During data collection, keeping the journal available for documentation of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions was necessary to examine my position

on the issues that arose during interviews and the focus group interview. Bracketing ceased when the research study was completed (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Through bracketing, the true essence endured in the data and in the textural-structural description by setting aside the researcher assumption (Colaizzi, 1978; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Staying open and faithful to the phenomenon was only achieved by remaining cognizant of biases and setting those biases aside during data collection and analysis (Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

Limitations for bracketing include a decline in rigor of the research when the researcher is unaware of his or her personal feelings and preconceptions (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Therefore, even if the issues are a function of reflectivity rather than objectivity due to a lack of preconceptions, the researcher “must take every reasonable step to ensure that presuppositions are brought to the level of consciousness, acknowledged, and then bracketed” (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010, p. 19). Acknowledging the need for recording of preconceived ideas and personal feelings helped to bring transparency to the study even though limitations arise in all studies (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010).

Data from individual teachers in Grades 3, 4, and 5 at denied-accreditation public schools in Virginia were collected during and after bracketing my own experiences. The data collection methods included pictorial representations; semi-structured, individual interviews; and a focus group interview. Pictorial representations occurred immediately before individual interviews (Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Barrett & Bridson, 1983; Bosacki, Marini, & Dane, 2007; Carrera & Oceja, 2007; Light, 1985). In a private location chosen by the participant, each third, fourth, or fifth grade teacher at a denied-accreditation public school was given a maximum of 10 minutes to complete his or her drawing representing his or her experiences of parental

involvement while employed at a denied-accreditation school. Participants were vaguely prompted by asking them to “think about parent involvement during their experience in the denied accreditation school.” Coding for themes was obtained from categories including: number, size, and gender of the characters drawn; the positive/negative affect in facial expression of characters and bystanders; and the depiction or lack of depiction of verbal communication such as thought bubbles or speech bubbles (Bosacki et al., 2007; Tamm, 2000). A licensed art therapist was employed for an accurate reading of the themes in the pictorial representations.

The individual interviews took place at the same private, quiet location chosen by the teachers at a denied-accreditation public school for the pictorial representations. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews was to allow the person interviewed to be a part of “the meaning making rather than a conduit from which information is retrieved” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). A one-on-one interview, in a neutral location chosen by the participant, allowed him or her to speak freely about his or her experiences (Adler & Adler, 2002; Herzog, 2005). Each first interview lasted no more than 30 minutes. If an interview was not complete after 30 minutes, the participant and I scheduled a second meeting, not to exceed five days after the initial interview. All interviews were voice and video recorded for transcription purposes.

The focus group interview was also voice and video recorded for transcription purposes. One focus group interview took place no longer than a month after the semi-structured interviews, allowing the researcher to develop at least 10 tentative focus group interview discussion prompts grounded in the initial interview data. The additional data gained from the focus group interview came from the freedom of the participants who were encouraged to talk to one another and ask questions of one another as well as comment on each other’s experiences

which they could not do during individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1995). The third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at a denied-accreditation public school took part in a focus group interview lasting no longer than one session of 20 minutes in a quiet and private agreed upon location. Participants were the same third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers who were interviewed during the semi-structured interviews.

The data from pictorial representations, semi-structured interview questions, and focus group interview were analyzed to give each statement equal value which was then reevaluated to delete irrelevant and overlapping topics, thus eventually leaving only clusters of themes (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the themes were used to understand a unified statement of the essences of the experiences and the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

Following are the research questions that guided this research study:

RQ1: How do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools describe their experiences with academic parental involvement?

RQ2: What preservice and in-service training do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers experience to foster academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools?

RQ3: In what ways do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers perceive their experiences with academic parental involvement influence their communication methods with parents at denied-accreditation schools?

Setting

The sites for this proposed study included three denied-accreditation elementary schools across the state of Virginia. Elementary schools ranged from independent micropolitan and metropolitan cities to counties in northern Virginia, western Virginia, and southeastern Virginia.

A micropolitan city is an urban cluster with a population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2015). A metropolitan city is a densely-populated core urban area of 50,000 or more people (U. S. Census Bureau, 2015). Counties are a local level of government smaller than a state but are larger than a town (U. S. Census Bureau, 2015). When researching schools to include, school climate was considered by consulting the school report cards available on the VDOE website. School report cards are published yearly, listing academic and behavioral successes and weaknesses. School climate is crucial for creating a safe and positive learning environment. Climate can also be a catalyst for successful or unsuccessful teacher and parent meaningful, two-way communication.

The initial rationale for including 10 schools was that 10 elementary schools had been labeled as denied-accreditation schools for three or more years (VDOE, 2016). However, for this study, the three school districts that agreed to participate resulted in six denied-accreditation elementary schools. The Virginia elementary school locations were widespread, and the participants' total years of experiences ranged from 6 to 15 years of teaching. The participants' total years of teaching experience at the specific denied-accreditation school ranged from 2 to 10. Some of the schools had turnaround programs working with them so they were not allowed to partake in any outside research. On the newest 2016-2017 report, 59 elementary schools had been denied accreditation, increasing by 46 schools since the 2015-2016 school year. In order to use teachers with the most lived experience of working in a denied-accreditation school, the six longest-denied schools since the 2012-2013 school year were used as possible sites with three districts agreeing to participate.

In the event of a school reconstituting, the school was included in the study if the school approved and any staff members remained in the reconstituted school that met the criteria as a

third, fourth, or fifth grade teacher with at least two years of teaching experience and one year of working in the school while rated as a denied-accreditation school. Schools that employed a turnaround program were omitted from the study due to the program requiring that no outside research be conducted with the school. Maximum variation sampling is a type of purposeful sampling used to understand a wide range of teachers' experiences with the parent involvement phenomenon at denied-accreditation schools. The teachers' descriptions of parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools were important for this study's implications with in-service and preservice programs and staff development opportunities.

To reach data saturation, 10 participants were chosen from three districts or a total of six denied-accreditation elementary schools. Upon completion, the goal was to reach data saturation with a diverse sample to develop a full and complete model (Creswell, 2013). The schools were identified using the VDOE website and published VDOE school report cards which report the accreditation rating for each year per school. The VDOE is responsible for developing and implementing strategic plans for the schools in the state of Virginia as well as measuring and tracking performance progress of students in public schools throughout the state (VDOE, 2016). Schools that currently receive a denied-accreditation rating have already failed to meet AYP for at least four years. Each of these schools has a unique school culture; some are Title I funded, located in large cities, or located in suburban neighborhoods. The settings were chosen by their assigned VDOE accreditation rating. It is the scores of the third, fourth, and fifth grades that determine whether a school has met AYP for accreditation (VDOE, 2016).

A denied-accreditation school has "failed to meet the requirements for full or partial accreditation for four consecutive years" (VDOE, 2016, para. 2). Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers were chosen based on their high-stress position where 72% of testing teachers felt

moderate or extreme pressure from school and administration to prepare students to pass the state learning assessments (NEA, 2015). As instructed by the conditional IRB letter, 10 school board offices of each district were contacted to determine what specific documents and forms were necessary to gain approval for the research study (see Appendix B for complete letter). Once the three district administrations approved the study, formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted. Each individual site was contacted after formal IRB approval to gain access to the school and possible participants (see Appendix C for the participating school approval letters and Appendix D for the teacher recruitment letter). It was important that each participant was informed and understood the implications of the part they agreed to take in the research (IRB, 2015). Participants completed a consent form acknowledging that the expectations of the study and the participants' roles in the study were clearly communicated with each participant (IRB, 2015; see Appendix E for the letter of informed consent). After formal IRB approval, participants from the schools chose a location or agreed to a confidential suggested location in their town. Participants and school settings were assigned alphabetized pseudonyms to protect their identity as well as create a sense of trust and confidentiality between the participants and me (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

Participants for this study included fully-licensed teachers with at least two years of experience in the teaching profession currently teaching third, fourth, or fifth grade in a denied-accreditation elementary school. I selected participants who were fully licensed and had at least two years of experience so that they could speak about their experiences with parents in the classroom as well as previous preservice teacher training. In addition to two years of teaching experience, teachers must have worked at least one full year in the school with a denied-

accreditation rating. Two years of teaching experience was required due to the reconstituting of schools and the possibility that staffing may be affected. Participants were asked to provide insight into their personal experiences with parental involvement in denied-accreditation schools in an attempt to fill the gap in the literature regarding teachers' experiences with parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools. The target sample size was a minimum 10 participants or until the analysis no longer yielded new or different data. No more participants were needed when data saturation was achieved and no new information or themes could be coded (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Creswell (2013) suggested that data collection continues until enough information is gathered to fully develop the model.

Creswell (2013) noted that purposeful sampling is used to develop an in-depth examination of a central phenomenon rather than to generalize a population. Purposeful sampling combined with maximum variation sampling was used in this study to determine the participants from each site. Purposeful sampling is best applied with information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). For this study, the individuals studied were especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of parental involvement. Rather than randomly selecting participants or sites for generalizability, they were selected to succinctly express their individual experiences in a reflective manner (Palinkas et al., 2015). Within the purposeful sampling approach, there was an opportunity to compare, contrast, and identify similarities and differences of the phenomenon. This was extremely important for this study's implications in teacher preparatory programs and staff development opportunities in parental involvement since many teachers feel they were not trained specifically to involve parents in the school and classroom (Dubis & Bernadowski, 2015; Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015; Sukhbaatar, 2014; Unal & Unal, 2014).

Maximum variation sampling was specifically used as purposeful sampling to find the important shared patterns that cut across cases and emerged from heterogeneity (Palinkas et al., 2015). Maximum variation, emphasizing breadth and variation, works with purposeful sampling to locate and examine the differences rather than the similarities (Palinkas et al., 2015). For this study, participants worked in different school locations around the state of Virginia such as rural, urban and suburban, as well as some Title I funded schools. Maximum variation was used to document the diverse variations that emerged from the differing conditions across the state of Virginia including varying socioeconomic statuses.

Ten denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia during the 2015-2016 school year were chosen as potential sites for the study. To attain data saturation, a maximum of four consenting participants were selected from each consenting elementary school to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The consenting participants were required to have at least two years of teaching experience and at least one year teaching at a denied-accreditation elementary school in Virginia. The maximum number of participants from one school was necessary to obtain a variety of experiences and to reach data saturation. More teachers meeting the requirements could have been approached to participate in the study if data saturation had not occurred. Participants were male or female, third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers with at least two years of overall teaching experience and full licensure awarded from the state of Virginia working in a denied-accreditation elementary school for at least one school year.

Regarding compensation, participants were invited to interview at the local public library near the schools. When meeting in this type of location, I offered to buy the participants a drink, snack, or small meal. If the location chosen by the participant did not serve food, I offered to treat the participant to a breakfast, lunch, or dinner depending on the time of day the interview

took place. If the participant did not have time for a meal or did not feel comfortable eating a meal then they were sent a five dollar Visa gift card after the interview. Furthermore, each participant in the study who did not withdraw prior to the conclusion of the study had his or her name placed in a drawing for a \$50 Visa gift card. At the conclusion of the interviews, the gift card was mailed to the winning participant.

Procedures

After submitting my application to the IRB, I was granted conditional approval from the IRB to find school districts that would be willing to allow the study in their district. I began searching for potential schools for my content validity survey, pilot interviews, and main interviews at the six elementary schools that had been labeled as denied-accreditation schools.

First, the district administration was contacted to secure permission to contact schools before I could submit information to gain full approval from the IRB. If the school district employed data and research leaders, my inquiry was forwarded to their office which required a completed research application. After the school's review process, I was granted access to three school districts with a total of six denied-accreditation elementary schools.

Once I submitted my school research approval letters and amended my IRB application to include the approved schools, I began reaching out to the school gatekeepers, or principals, to procure teachers that met my delimitations. After receiving the teachers' contact information, I emailed them individually with the IRB-approved documents and the consent form. I sought maximum variation in addition to purposeful sampling and convenience sampling. I hoped to reach participant variation regarding gender, age, level of education, and ethnicity. I explained to participants the purpose of the research and asked for signed permission to reproduce their pictorial representations. A total of 15 teachers replied, and dates and locations were arranged in

their area to conduct the confidential interviews whether they were pilot interviews or the main study interviews. Data saturation was reached when 10 participants were interviewed for the pictorial representations and semi-structured individual interviews. Two participants were chosen as pilot study participants. Participants also filled out the IRB consent form and returned all documents to me prior to any data collection. The study reached data saturation after interviewing 10 teachers. No new information was attained, and further coding was no longer feasible; furthermore, there was enough information from the 10 interviews to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Utilizing three methods of data collection including pictorial representations, semi-structured interviews, as well as a focus group interview, also enhanced the reliability of the results and attainment of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

I began practicing my interviewing methods and interview questions with a pilot study of two teachers from one of the approved denied-accreditation elementary schools. To determine the amount of participants to include in a pilot study, I randomly selected 1 fourth-grade teacher and one third-grade teacher which were between 10-20% of my major study sample size (Baker, 1994). Each pilot interview was audio recorded, but only one interview was transcribed and used in ATLAS.ti for transcription and coding practice purposes. These pilot interviews helped to create succinct interview questions as well as reword some that were not as clear to the pilot group participants. I also learned valuable interviewing and listening skills as well after listening to the recording for transcription purposes.

Reviewing the transcription and listening to the recording of my two pilot interviews resulted in rewording of some of the questions. During my study interviews, I needed to be cognizant of asking a question only once and focusing on any follow-up questions during the participant's response. When I listened to the pilot interview recordings, I found that I reworded

my questions multiple times using different word choice or syntax. As a teacher, this is something I do for my students to clarify, but for the interviews it could have been confusing. Because of this, I reworded my interview questions with more clear and concise language and syntax. During both pilot interviews, the pictorial representation and technology proceeded without any problems, and the information was kept locked in a Masterlock locking waterproof container and a locking filing cabinet.

Using ATLAS.ti required some self-learning which was aided by YouTube tutorials and ATLAS.ti tutorial documents. I also had to learn how to transcribe correctly and mark for long pauses. I also learned how to anchor the audio to the transcription which was difficult at first but after some practice it began to match up correctly. Next, I began memoing and coding in ATLAS.ti. Procedural texts published by ATLAS.ti were extremely helpful when learning how to create a memo, code, and link codes to memos.

It was at this time that I also sent the content validity survey to the schools to have all experts in the field of education/teaching complete the survey. I received a total of 43 surveys completed by the teachers and administration. The content validity ratio found that my overall interview questions were valid (see Appendix F).

Once the prospective participants agreed to participate and signed the IRB consent form, interviews were scheduled based on the best times for the participants to meet specifically outside of work hours. Each participant completed their pictorial representation of their experiences with parental involvement. I employed the use of an art therapist while keeping the identities of the participants confidential to find themes in the representations.

Each individual interview was audio recorded. Following each interview, I transcribed the interviews based on length and time constraints of the interview, again using pseudonyms for

each participant (see Appendices G and H for a sample interview transcription and a sample coded transcription). Immediately following each transcription, I began to analyze the data using memoing and coding in ATLAS.ti. The memoing was used to write down ideas about the evolving themes from the interviews (Creswell, 2013).

Kitzinger (1995) found that a focus group interview created with at least four or five teachers but no more than eight provide the best data. A focus group interview of 5 third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers from one denied-accreditation elementary school was held after the interviewing process. I also voice recorded the focus group interview and transcribed it as well. Recordings and transcriptions of all interviews were locked in a two-drawer metal cabinet in my home and will be saved for three years. After three years, they will be physically destroyed.

The Researcher's Role

As a teacher, my overall experiences were not favorable in regards to the way parents were academically involved in their child's education. I began working at a school provisionally accredited and in warning by the state. I would find myself resisting urges to contact and communicate with parents throughout the year to avoid confrontation. I found that the experience was very different at a school that was fully accredited. The later experiences were much more pleasant and professional.

I have also heard teachers talk negatively about their experiences with parents and how it affected their feelings towards the child, the class, and the profession in general. Many times, teachers will complain regarding the absence of parents at open house or parent teacher conferences; however, those same teachers will complain when parents are emailing, calling and setting up meetings to talk about their students' academic progress.

Since I work with low-performing students as an interventionist, I try to stay in contact with parents as much as possible to make sure they have an idea of ways to help at home. Many of the parents express dissatisfaction with classroom teachers who have a hard time communicating what is needed from the parents at home. Unfortunately, from fear of negative responses, I can also see why the teachers have stopped trying to communicate with parents and have almost removed the “home” factor completely by cutting them out.

I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study because I believe teachers want to express their feelings that have grown out of a lack of communication or miscommunication between parents and teachers. Reframing the way teachers look at communication and parent involvement can turn weaknesses into strengths (Watson & Bogotch, 2015). More importantly, there may be a public misconception regarding the experiences of third- and fourth-grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools, and one of the ways it can be best understood is through the lived experience of the participants.

According to the VDOE report findings for the 2016-2017 school year, there were 29 public schools over 11 divisions in the state of Virginia that have been given the denied-accreditation rating (VDOE, 2016). Over half of the 29 denied-accreditation schools are public elementary schools. I have observed a change in parent perception of the teachers and school as a whole while working in a low-SES elementary school that has recently struggled to meet the 75% AYP benchmark in reading. Over the three years that I have been employed at this rural school, the curriculum, teachers, and administration has not changed, yet the parents have voiced their concern and reacted differently as of late as the school’s standardized scores dropped. I explored the experiences that teachers have with parents at other schools that have

underachieved for multiple years and have been designated with a specific rating label from the state.

Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were used in this study, including pictorial representations, individual interviews, and a focus group interview. Before the participants were influenced by the interview questions or focus group interview discussions, participants completed a pictorial representation of their parent involvement experiences (Carrera & Ocejá, 2007). Pictorial representations are a method of recording feelings and experiences in picture form. This method has been used in phenomenological studies in the healthcare industry as well as with children in painful or emotional situations such as bullying (Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Bosacki et al., 2007).

Following the pictorial representation, the participants were individually interviewed, serving as the primary method of data collection (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Each interview was recorded and transcribed, and these interviews continued with each participant until data saturation was reached. One focus group interview was conducted and transcribed after the individual interviews. The sequence of the data collection was deliberate to hear from the key informants prior to allowing a group to meet on the topic (Morgan, 1996).

The pictorial representations activated the long-term memories of the participants (Kosslyn & Alper, 1977). These memories were established in the participants' consciousness and became available for drawing the pictorial representation (Kosslyn & Alper, 1977). From pictorial representations, the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers accessed their parent involvement memories and spoke about them in a more descriptive manner since every mental

picture came with a mentalese caption, reminding the participant what the picture represented (Fodor, 1975).

The individual interviews took place immediately following the pictorial representations so that the ideas, thoughts, and representation of concepts were still fresh in the participants' mind and mind's eye (Kosslyn & Alper, 1977). These ideas presented during the individual interviews assisted in writing interview guides for the focus group interview as well as assisted in moderating the focus group interview effectively (Morgan, 1996).

The focus group interview was the last piece of data collection, during which the participants shared experiences and explored topics that arose from the individual interviews (Morgan, 1996). The focus group interview participants were chosen from the same pool of individual interview participants creating more thematic evidence to support the emerging themes from the individual interviews (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008; Morgan, 1996).

Pictorial Representations

The initial method of data collection was pictorial representation (Carrera & Ocejia, 2007). Pictorial representation has been used significantly in past phenomenological studies dealing with health care and illness where participants either verbally or pictorially described their experiences with their specific illness (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). In a study conducted by Anderson and Spencer (2002), participants were to verbally describe their experiences having HIV/AIDS. As the cognitive representation themes emerged, the researchers determined that asking participants to draw their image of AIDS provided greater depth than verbal cognitive description alone (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). Educational research studies have employed pictorial representations for young students to describe their experiences with bullying (Bosacki et al., 2007). Several studies have found that vague and open-ended verbal directions for

pictorial representation tasks elicit a more free and creative outcome (Barrett & Bridson, 1983; Bosacki et al., 2007; Light, 1985). After completion of the pictorial representations, participants in the studies were asked questions about their drawings in a general sense and coded for both the drawing and the story interviews (Bosacki et al., 2007). Coding the pictorial representations included the number, size, and gender of the characters drawn, positive/negative affect in the face of the characters and bystanders, as well as depiction of the verbal communication (Bosacki et al., 2007).

For this study, after introductions and before the individual interview, each participant was given a maximum of 10 minutes with a three-minute warning to complete a pictorial drawing. Participants signed their code name or pseudonym to the art rather than their own name to ensure confidentiality. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers participating in the individual interviews were vaguely asked to think about a general parent involvement moment they remembered during their third, fourth, or fifth grade teaching in the denied-accreditation school and to then draw and color a pictorial representation of the experience.

Coding for themes was completed by a registered and IRB-approved art therapist so as to have accurate codes created for the pictorial representations. No interview questions were asked regarding the pictorial representations because the data were meant to bring memories to the surface for the interview portion and to be analyzed without participant justification. Coding for themes by the art therapist involved analysis of various categories including: number, size, and gender of the characters drawn; the positive/negative affect in facial expression of characters and bystanders; and as the depiction or lack of depiction of verbal communication such as thought bubbles or speech bubbles (Bosacki et al, 2007; Tamm, 2000). Pictorial representations were taken to a licensed art therapist to assist in analyzing the information the participants were

attempting to impart. The information and image were uploaded into ATLAS.ti and coded based on the results from the art therapist.

The data expected to be obtained from the pictorial representations included either a high number of characters in the drawing or two characters in the drawing, the gender of the characters to be mainly same sex as the participant, the character size may show the parent/guardian to be larger than the teacher, and the facial expression of the characters would show both faces with either negative or positive facial expressions but very few neutral facial expressions or different expressions from one another. Any verbal content that the participant drew was either negative or positive with the parent having the stronger voice as compared to the teacher's voice. This data helped to answer questions regarding the perceptions of the teachers in regards to parent involvement and to bring the memories of working with parents to the forefront which was then expounded during the interview process.

Individual Interviews

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews (individual and focus group) served as the primary method for all data collection in the study. Individual in-depth interviews were a major source of the data for phenomenological studies as early as Husserl's studies (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Husserl, 1931; Rabionet, 2011). The purpose of using a semi-structured interview is to allow the person interviewed to be a part of "the meaning making rather than a conduit from which information is retrieved" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). Because the research was qualitative, I sought to explore meaning and perceptions to contribute to themes rather than standard analysis (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In hopes of obtaining a deep and rich understanding of the phenomenon, the semi-structured interviews worked best to contribute to the body of knowledge that was based on life experiences for the participants

(DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Rabionet, 2011). After IRB approval and school district approval, I arranged times and locations to conduct pictorial representations and the semi-structured individual interviews. The location of the individual interviews took place in a mutually agreed upon location between me and the participants since the topic could have been personal and emotional to the participant (Herzog, 2005). The mutually agreed upon location tended to be the public library in the city that the school was located. Each participant was allowed to agree to the location where he or she felt most comfortable. One-on-one interviews in neutral locations chosen by the participant allowed him or her to speak freely about his or her experiences (Adler & Adler, 2002; Herzog, 2005). Each interview lasted no more than 30 minutes. If an interview was not complete after 30 minutes, the participant and I determined a second meeting not to exceed five days after the initial interview. In some cases, participants were asked to complete a follow-up interview during data analysis in the event that new and interesting themes became apparent. The length of the interview depended on the experiences of the teachers and the detailed information they provided. Those who had been teaching longer had more parent involvement experiences, but those who had just begun teaching found the experiences to be more influential (Rice, 2010). Also, the flow of the interview questions, sub-questions, and clarifications caused some interviews to last longer than others. Each interview session only lasted a maximum of 30 minutes with one follow-up session that also lasted a maximum of 30 minutes.

The individual interviews were recorded using a Sony digital camcorder, a digital voice recorder, and a cassette tape voice recorder. The Sony camcorder was used to record both the visual aspect of each interview as well as backup audio for later transcription. The digital voice recorder, using an uncompressed audio format for better quality, was used as the main method

for voice transcription and easy upload into ATLAS.ti. The cassette voice recorder was used only as secondary backup in case both forms of recording devices failed. The Sony camcorder recordings were revisited for notes on facial expression, body language, and gestures. The audio recording on the Sony camcorder served as backup for the digital voice recorder and cassette tape recorder in the case there was an auditory discrepancy of what was said during transcription. Because there was audio and video recording of each interview, there was no need to take handwritten notes during the interview. This was beneficial because researchers should be immersed in the interview and listening to each response (Herzog, 2005).

After the participant stated his or her name, each interview began with an ice-breaker question that allowed the participants to ease into the interview. A basic question such as, “Why did you become a teacher?” was used to get teachers to open up on a positive topic about teaching in general. Subsequent interview questions guided the interview towards the research questions.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.
2. How many years have you been teaching and how many years have you worked at your current place of employment?
3. Why did you become a teacher?
4. Research suggests that school climate can affect teachers’ perceptions of teaching and staff morale. What are some of your favorite memories at your current place of employment?
5. Preservice teachers should be prepared to work with a variety of caregivers in beneficial parent-teacher relationships. In-service teachers should be kept up to date with technology

advancements for communication. Tell me about your teacher preparation education for working with parents.

6. Creating a climate of respect requires that both parent and teacher acknowledge the roles of one another in an academic context. Please tell me about the parent involvement in this school and some of your personal experiences with it.
7. There is diversity among parents and each family has best communication practices. What methods have you tried to involve parents in your classroom?
8. Parent involvement can provide the link between what is learned in the classroom and what is learned at home. How do you feel that your communication with parents positively or negatively affects student's academic involvement?
9. Working with a primary caregiver can be a complex task especially with our fast passed world. Most teachers recognize effective parent involvement or ineffective or absent parent involvement. What do you look for in effective parent involvement?
10. I appreciate the time and thought you've given to this. What else would you like to mention about parental involvement at your school?

Questions one through four are knowledge questions (Patton, 2015) and are designed to ease the reader into the interview. The questions are non-threatening and allow the participant to act as the expert building rapport between the participant and me (Patton, 2015). Questions three and four also provide information regarding motivation and teaching memories so that teachers can express their feelings about the overall teaching profession. This is the first insight into understanding the participants' experiences of parent involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools.

Questions five through seven introduce parent involvement communication preparation and practices for teachers. Research suggests that a lack of experience and education in the area of communication can affect teachers' views of the education field. Regardless of teachers' level of experience or formal education, professional development leads to a feeling of higher efficacy and lower burnout (Pas et al., 2012). Question five allows teachers to reflect on their professional development experiences prior to teaching and during teaching. For teachers who have diverse cultures, this question is especially important when one of the strongest predictors of schools' success for English language learners is their parental involvement (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).

Question eight allows the participant to reflect on his or her parent communication methods and ability. This question requires that the participant be vulnerable and open about his or her professional practices. This question is asked further into the interview to ease the participant into the topic. It is also asked specifically after the participant listed the methods of parent communication he or she used from year to year. Once participants have a realization of their methods, they can truly reflect on how their methods positively or negatively affect student academics. Research suggests that increasing the lines of communication between school and family can also increase family engagement and a child's school readiness and success (Bokony et al., 2013b). Utilizing more than one form of communication encourages higher family engagement which research suggests yields higher academic success for students (Bokony et al., 2013b).

The ninth question asks teachers to describe their opinion of academic parental involvement. Although this question requires a description from the participants, the responses are useful in understanding what teachers favor and disfavor in parental involvement. Research

shows that teachers in under-resourced schools find that parents who contribute materials are favorable. In schools with materials already provided, favorable parent involvement is considered to be phone calls and parent availability (Christianakis, 2011). At denied-accreditation schools, the participants can express their own opinions of how parents can be involved in order to understand the teachers' experiences.

The final question is a one-shot question that allows the participant a final opportunity to share any other valuable experiences with parent involvement (Patton, 2015). It also serves as the final question of the interview that participants can use to tell their story. The concluding statement allows control to remain with the participant even after responding to the emotional and personal questions in two through nine.

Focus Group Interview

Focus group interviews provide a setting for a group to reflect on questions asked by the interviewer and are aimed at collecting high-quality data (Patton, 2015). Focus group interviews in qualitative research are utilized after individual interviews take place. A focus group interview, as a form of a group interview, was used to allow communication to flow between research participants to generate deeper and richer data (Creswell, 2013; Kitzinger, 1995). The additional data gained from the focus group interview comes from the freedom of the participants who are encouraged to talk to one another and ask questions of one another as well as comment on each other's experiences which they could not do during individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1995). Focus group interviews "can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299).

There should be at least four or five participants but no more than eight in the focus group interview (Kitzinger, 1995). The participants were a naturally occurring, homogeneous

group of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at a denied-accreditation public school. In order to capitalize on the shared experiences of the group, the groups will be homogeneous (Kitzinger, 1995). The aim is that various perspectives are represented in the group; however, they all surrounded the central phenomenon of parent involvement at a denied-accreditation school. The goal of the focus group interview was to yield rich information through the use of interaction with other participants to add new or in-depth information to the data beyond that of the individual interviews (Creswell, 2013).

These participants met together in a common, agreed upon, and private location where they felt free to discuss their feelings and experiences with parental involvement at their denied-accreditation school. The focus group interview took place no longer than a month after the initial individual interviews so that a maximum of 10 focus group interview discussion prompts could be created grounded in the initial analysis of the individual interview data. The focus group interview prompts were also grounded in the literature as well as the themes found during individual interview transcription analysis. The focus group interview lasted no longer than 20 minutes. Since all participants were comfortable with the proposed setting, the focus group interview occurred at one of the denied-accreditation elementary schools where individual interviews also took place. During the focus group interview, I explained the aim of the group which was to talk with one another about their experiences rather than talk directly to me (Kitzinger, 1995). One popular exercise for the focus group interview “includes presenting the group with a series of statements” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 301). During the discussion, I served as a structured eavesdropper who waited for the conversation to conclude and presented the next statement for discussion before the talk lost momentum (Kitzinger, 1995). The focus group of participants was a dynamic group of individuals who brought a variety of experiences to the

discussion and added to or confirmed the findings from the individual interviews. The focus group interview did not exceed 20 minutes and only met on one agreed-upon occasion.

The statements used for the focus group interview were created after individual interviews took place. After initial analysis of the interview data, the tentative discussion statements were created to deepen and enrich the data that was previously collected during individual interviews. The tentative focus group interview statements were grounded in the responses and research from the individual interviews. In order to understand teacher experiences, it was important to find out the teachers' expectations. If a teacher expects parent involvement to be helping with homework versus another teacher who expects parental involvement to be constant email communication about achievement in the class, the teachers' experiences can differ when talking about negative and positive experiences. The tentative statements sought to determine each teacher's lived experience and definition of parent involvement. The statements included:

- (1) My experiences of school mandates with parent involvement include...,
- (2) My training opportunities to involve parents collaboratively have been...,
- (3) Experiences with parents that shaped the way I communicate with parents include...,
- and
- (4) My experiences with parent involvement influence my teaching by...

The same recording methods as the individual semi-structured interviews were used for the focus group interview. Therefore, the Sony digital camcorder was used for video recording and for backup audio. Meanwhile, the digital voice recorder and the cassette tape voice recorder were used as the primary means and backup respectively for audio transcription (Kitzinger,

1995). There was no need for notes during the interview since visual and audio data was recorded and backed up.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in phenomenology focuses on bracketing out one's experiences. The study has direct access to the living meaning of an experience without involving the researcher when the researcher brackets his or her assumptions (Moustakas, 1994). Using Moustakas' method for data analysis modified from van Kaam's (1959) method of analysis, the data gained from pictorial representations, transcribed individual interviews, and the focus group interview underwent various steps for analysis. The steps included bracketing, horizontalizing, clustering the horizons into themes, and organizing the horizons and themes into a clear textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). It is necessary that the researcher "explicates his or her own intentional consciousness through transcendental process before [he or she] can understand someone or something that is not his or her own" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 37). Bracketing requires synthesis as the final step in the research process. The synthesis of the research represents the essences at that time and place from the point of the researcher who has exhausted the imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Bracketing is one of the forms of phenomenological reduction where the focus of the research is set in brackets and anything else is set aside (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing allows the entire research process to be rooted in the topic and the research questions (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1970) understood that by stripping away and abstaining from the knowing of things, it allowed something to be considered in its true essence (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing becomes the first step to explicate the essential nature of the phenomenon itself (Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994).

During the interview process, I bracketed out my own experiences by journaling. Through bracketing, the true essence was able to come through in the data and later in the textural-structural description by setting aside the researcher assumption (Colaizzi, 1978; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). I journaled my thoughts and opinions at each interview site and after each interview to remain cognizant of and to set aside any biases and preconceived notions. Setting aside biases allowed me to be open and faithful to the phenomenon itself (Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

Journaling allowed me to set aside my prejudgments and biases as an elementary school teacher so that I would hopefully be able to focus solely on the lived experiences of parent involvement from the participants' interviews (Moustakas, 1994). This was also necessary to assure that leading questions did not arise during the interview phase of the data collection and later in the horizontalization phase of data analysis.

Horizontalization is the next step in Moustakas' data analysis modified from van Kaam's (1959) method for data analysis. Horizontalization is the understanding that the horizons and the possibility for more discoveries is unlimited (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher "highlights significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 1994, p. 82). Though the research horizons will come into the researchers' conscious experience, it is "the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinctive character" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95).

After the participants were interviewed and data had been collected, the data were transcribed and entered into ATLAS.ti, which is a coding program that allowed me to code the data and highlight statements of significance to the study. These are non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements which are the invariant meaning units of the experience (Moustakas,

1994). I was also able to associate the scanned pictorial representation and the voice recording from the interview or focus group interview.

Once the horizons remained from the horizontalization, clusters of meaning were derived from the significant statements. These clusters are themes that can be combined until the most relevant themes remain (Creswell, 2013). Transcription of the interviews and focus group interview dialogue allowed the data to undergo clustering of the horizons into themes through the use of ATLAS.ti (Moustakas, 1994). ATLAS.ti is a software program for qualitative data analysis that allows researchers to process a vast amount of data, code data, and keep track of the interrelations and importance in the coding scheme (ATLAS.ti, 2016). It is important to include memos through the use of software which is a reflection of the researcher's own textural descriptions through imaginative variation which is a step following the phenomenological reduction stage (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, ATLAS.ti was used to cluster the horizons into themes and create code for those themes. Memoing was also used to write down ideas about the evolving themes. These notes, whether textual or conceptual, added to the credibility and confidence placed on both the data and the analysis (Golafshani, 2003).

A structural and textural description is created once the data have been collected, coded, and combined (Creswell, 2013). The textural description is the experiences of the person and the structural descriptions are their experiences or how they experienced the phenomenon based upon the conditions, situations, and contexts (Creswell, 2013). This description begins with the bracketing of ideas and returns to the thing itself. During this process, there is a state of freedom where "every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of the experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96).

In this study, the description of the experience brought together the person, conscious experience, and phenomenon to be presented to the public (Moustakas, 1994).

After creating textural and structural descriptions, an understanding of the essence of the central phenomenon is discovered (Creswell, 2013). This essence is the essential, invariant structure that focuses on the common experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). The essence focuses on the participants' experiences, and for this study the essence focused on third, fourth, and fifth grade teacher's experiences of parent involvement at denied-accreditation public schools (Moustakas, 1994). This sharing of the experience allowed the participants' experiences to be described reflexively so that the reader can better understand the phenomenology with the feeling to understand what it is like for someone to experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study addresses credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The four constructs were created in response to the need for alternative models appropriate to the qualitative design. Researchers also needed to ensure research rigor without sacrificing the qualitative research design. Guba (1981) proposed the four constructs to aid researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy qualitative study. It is necessary to accurately and fairly represent that data gathered throughout the study (Creswell, 2013). Guba (1981) argued that credibility is the most important construct to ensure trustworthiness of a study.

Credibility

Credibility includes a way for writers to reference their terms and strategies used for validation (Creswell, 2013). I used triangulation of data, peer review, and member checking to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of the data builds credibility that is

necessary for finding the essence of the participants in the study. Three forms of data were utilized including: pictorial representations, individual interviews, and a focus group interview. Peer review and member checking are two ways to assure that the information and descriptions are presented in a way that brings a true voice to the lives of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Participant approval was of the utmost importance when checking the transcriptions and analysis of the interviews.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability relies heavily on consistency of the study and stability of the findings (Guba, 1981). Through the use of data collection methods, member checking, and peer reviews, the transcriptions and analysis aided in dependability of the study findings. Multiple methods helped aid in the dependability of the study as well as the use of a focus group interview. The study's use of consistent inquiry by collecting the data using multiple recording devices and transcriptions was one way of assessing the dependability of the study. Presenting a rich and clear portrayal of the participants as well as describing the logic used for selecting them also added to the dependability of the study.

Bracketing my experiences is the first way that I established confirmability. The value and the data of the study should focus on the participants and avoid researcher bias through the use of bracketing (Creswell, 2013). The findings remained free from bias and researcher assumptions allowing the voice to the participants to be heard. My impressions of the places I visited and the people I met were written in a notebook so I could be aware of any unknowing researcher bias. Member checking was documented so the results of the study were confirmed by the participants. A data audit examining the data collection and analysis was also conducted to ensure there was no bias during collection and analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Transferability

For qualitative studies, transferability relies on the extent to which a reader can transfer information to other settings (Creswell, 2013). It also refers to the possibility that what was found in the context of this study can be applicable to another context (Creswell, 2013). The in-depth, open-ended interview questions allowed the data to delve deep into the lived experiences and provide a rich description of those experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues can arise in all phases of the research process (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, it is important not to deceive the participants regarding the nature of the study during data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2013). It is also necessary to respect the site and the participants by giving back after the data collection concludes (Creswell, 2013). To avoid any ethical issues that may arise, every effort was made to create a strong sense of trust with each participant and site. The following methods were utilized as ethical considerations: IRB approval, local permission with informed consent from the site and participants, participants' consent to reproduce their pictorial representations, and an attempt to give back to the participants. The participants continued to have their privacy respected and protected through the use of assigning alphabetical pseudonyms and securing the records to the data and transcriptions on a password protected computer and hardcopies in a locked, metal filing cabinet.

Due to the nature of the study, confidentiality of the participants was critical to their involvement and true description of their experiences. As stated on the informed consent form completed at the onset of the study, participants' participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time (Creswell, 2013). The participants' rights are best defined by Capron (1989) who stated that any kind of research should be guided by the principles of respect

for people, beneficence, and justice. Recognition of those rights includes the right to be informed about the study, the right to decide whether to participate, and the right to withdraw without penalty (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

Summary

Chapter Three examined the research methods that were used to understand the experiences of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers with academic parent involvement in denied-accreditation schools. The three research questions, including the justification for each, were reviewed and a detailed description of the setting, participants, and procedures for completing this transcendental phenomenological study was provided. Furthermore, I provided a thorough explanation of the data that were collected in the study, including pictorial representations, individual interviews, and a focus group interview. Finally, the measures to ensure trustworthiness, and relevant ethical considerations for the participants, were described (Moustakas, 1994).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to understand third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia. Academic parental involvement refers to two-way communication between parents and teachers. Denied-accreditation schools are public elementary schools scoring below 70% on state assessments for four or more consecutive years. The findings in this chapter include a group description, individual descriptions of each participant including: gender, age, grade level taught, subject area taught, years of teaching experience, and motivation for becoming a teacher, as well as their focus group interview contribution. The coded data from the pictorial representations, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interview are organized thematically, describe emergent themes related to each research question, and answer each research question. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

Participants

Eight females and two males participated in the study and are named through the use of pseudonyms for confidentiality. The age range, grade level taught, area of study, years of teaching, and motivation for becoming a teacher vary among the participants. Overall, the participants ranged in age from 25-56. Four teachers taught third grade, four teachers taught fourth grade, and two teachers taught fifth grade. Six of the ten teachers taught all subject areas. Three of the ten teachers in fourth and fifth grade taught only math or only math and science. One of the ten teachers taught only fourth grade Virginia studies classes. The total years of

teaching experience ranged from three to 22 years with each participant teaching at least two or more years in his or her current grade level at the denied-accreditation elementary school.

Focus group interview participants included five of the same participants from the individual interviews. Due to location and availability, five participants were not able to attend the focus group interview. In order to separate semi-structured interview data from focus group interview data, the participants were given a Focus Group Interview Participant letter when referring to focus group interview data. Individual interview participants were referred to by pseudonyms when stating data gained from the individual, semi-structured interviews. Table 1 provides the demographic information for each participant using his or her pseudonym and Focus Group Interview Participant letter.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Name	Age	Grade	Subject Area	Experience	Years at denied accreditation school	Focus group interview participant letter
Abby	30	3 rd	All	6 years	6 years	A
Barbara	31	4 th	Math	8 years	2 years	
Chrystal	43	4 th	All	22 years	10 years	
Clara	45	3 rd	All	10 years	10 years	B
Danielle	47	3 rd	All	15 years	6 years	
Kerry	28	5 th	Math	3 years	3 years	
Patrick	31	4 th	VA Studies	10 years	5 years	
Samantha	32	3 rd	All	10 years	4 years	C
Sarah	28	3 rd	All	6 years	6 years	D
Scott	28	5 th	Math	7 years	2 years	E

Note. Experience is the teacher's total years of teaching in the education field.

Abby (Focus Group Participant A)

Abby began her teaching career at her current place of employment. She has taught six years at the denied-accreditation elementary school while it was going through the accreditation process. She has worked in third grade for the totality of her employment at the school. Abby's motivation for becoming a teacher lies in her ability to work with children and watch them learn and grow. Her fondest memory, as an example of her commitment to working with children,

was “helping them during the yearly unit on habitats when the students make a diorama of the habitat they have chosen.”

Barbara

Barbara was a fourth-grade math teacher with two years of experience at the elementary level and six years of total teaching experience. She gained teaching experience working as support staff personnel in a Mississippi school prior to her full-time licensed teaching career. Her unattached, modular classroom was decorated with graphic organizers covering the fabric walls. Each graphic organizer depicted math strategies that the students could use throughout the year. Barbara’s motivation for choosing the teaching profession originated from her desire to bring work to low socio-economic towns and cities. Both the town she grew up in and the town where she was currently residing had a median household income of around \$32,000 and faced a decline in job growth. Barbara had felt that a strong education could bring job growth to her town since most students in her district move away from the area due to a lack of employment opportunities. Growing up as a child, Barbara explained that she was not the most dedicated student herself until a teacher took a group of students on a field trip and talked with them about the possibilities of college. Barbara had never thought about furthering her education beyond high school but growing up in a low socio-economic town she “knew that education could break the cycle of poverty as well as bring back jobs to failing towns and cities.” Barbara wanted to instill a love of education in her own students much like her own teacher instilled a passion to continue Barbara’s education after high school.

Chrystal

Chrystal was a fourth- grade teacher at a denied-accreditation elementary school in Virginia. She had been teaching for 22 years with 10 of those years at her current place of

employment. Prior to public school, she taught at a private elementary school in Virginia. After her child graduated from high school, she left the private school setting and began teaching at a public school where she had “to learn a new set of standards and way of teaching.” She enjoyed working with her colleagues and the students she had taught over the years. Chrystal has found that students in academically achieving private schools are not inherently different from those at a denied-accreditation elementary public school. She believed that “they are still children who have needs and wants as well as a desire to succeed.” Her favorite memories at her current teaching position included the Girls on the Run program she developed with a colleague at the school. They mentor the young girls while also helping them reach goals beyond that of running. Chrystal also loved the challenge of crafting engaging lessons for her students while running her own TeachersPayTeachers store online.

Clara (Focus Group Participant B)

Clara became a career switcher later in life. She began working in real estate. Clara enjoyed working in real estate for its freedom to be her own boss as well as meeting new people. To Clara, each day in real estate was a different day making it new and exciting. One of the drawbacks of working in real estate was the amount of time she spent in the office and on the road showing homes. When Clara and her husband began planning a family, she knew she would not be able to go back into real estate. After having children and becoming a stay-at-home mom, she decided to go back to school to study elementary education. She had been teaching third grade for a total of 10 years, all at the same school. Clara grew up and received her education in Virginia. Clara’s motivation to teach stemmed from observing her mother’s experience in education. Clara stated that she “had always watched her mother prepare lessons, purchase materials for fun activities, and enjoy the job she did.” Clara recognized the hard work

it required to switch careers; however, she was willing to dedicate her time to learning and to enhancing her teaching craft now that her own children were grown adults.

Danielle

Danielle was a third-grade teacher who had taught at various schools and grade levels. Danielle spent a few years teaching elementary, First Step, and Pre-Kindergarten in South Dakota, Germany, and Florida all at Department of Defense (DOD) schools. When combining her years of teaching from around the world, Danielle estimated a total of 15 years of licensed teaching experience. After her husband was stationed in Virginia, Danielle began teaching all third-grade subjects at a denied-accreditation elementary school. She had been teaching at that school for six years. Her classroom was sparse at the time of the interview because, as she noted, they were “packing up for summer vacation.” Danielle’s motivation to continue teaching stemmed from the students’ successes. She felt that it is

really fun when they see that they’re successful and when they come back...because they’re still coming back...and how they mature and just get along with each other when at the beginning of the year you’re thinking “oh my gosh, how is this going to work?”

Danielle experienced teaching in various locations around the world and could never compare one school or students to another school or students. She loved teaching and the challenge it presented to make her work harder each day.

Kerry

Kerry was a 28-year-old fifth-grade math teacher. She had three years of experience at her current denied-accreditation elementary school in Virginia. Kerry had always wanted to be a teacher, but when she graduated with an early childhood education degree, there were no positions available in her town or surrounding towns. Instead, she became an instructional

assistant at a pre-K school. Kerry remembered that “it was so hard to be an instructional assistant when all [she] wanted was [her] own classroom.” Her favorite memory was when she was offered the position of a fifth-grade math teacher at her local elementary school and began preparing to teach in her own classroom. Kerry had to begin teaching fifth grade on a provisional license since her original license was a Pre-K-2 license. She was then in her third year of teaching and obtained full licensure to teach K-5. She was also thinking of pursuing a certification or degree as a math specialist so that she “can devote more time to working with those students who struggle in math.”

Patrick

Patrick became a teacher because he always loved history and was told to find a lucrative profession. He grew up in a small, rural town and did not want to leave it, so the best way to work with history was “either at the local historical sites giving tours or passing on the love of history to students.” Patrick chose to pursue a degree in secondary education history but changed his major when he went to complete a school observation. He “walked into the elementary school and saw all female teachers.” Eventually, Patrick changed his course of secondary education to elementary education and was lucky to be hired out of college at a local elementary school. He taught fourth grade for five years but relocated to his current place of employment when a fourth-grade Virginia Studies position became available. Then, he enjoyed teaching specifically history to the fourth graders at the denied-accreditation elementary school. He had a total of 10 years of experience with five years at his current school. Patrick reflected on all of his field trips as his favorite memories, however stressful and tiring they may be. He “loves watching the kids eyes light up when they see or learn about information they never knew existed.”

Samantha (Focus Group Participant C)

Samantha was what she considered an educational “tweener.” She had about 10 years of experience but not as many years of experience as some of the veteran teachers in the profession. Samantha began teaching in the preschool sector of her district prior to teaching in the K-5 building. Growing up, Samantha knew that she wanted to teach; however, she did not know in what subject area she wanted to specialize. Specifically, she was interested in teaching band and music class since her family was involved in band. Samantha also performed in the school bands growing up. She began teaching preschool but moved into third grade. Samantha currently served as the third grade team level chair and taught all subjects. She had been teaching third grade for four years at the denied-accreditation elementary school. She also served on the parent involvement committee at her school. All of her interests fueled her passion for education and the loving community she created in her classroom.

Sarah (Focus Group Participant D)

Sarah became a third grade teacher simply because she loved children and she loved to teach them. She had completed six years at the same elementary school, having taught third grade for each of those years. Although she had been at the same denied-accreditation school for six years, she never tired of watching “the smiles on the children’s faces when they’re learning new things.” Sarah enjoyed integrating technology in all of her lessons “to broaden their scope of understanding.” During the time of the interviews, Sarah taught in the only third-grade inclusion classroom which had proven to be emotionally demanding at times, but she enjoyed working with her special education co-teacher. She welcomed the challenge of working with students across a range of abilities and collaborating with her special education co-teacher.

Scott (Focus Group Participant E)

Scott was a fifth-grade math teacher who grew up in Pennsylvania and received his teaching education in the Pennsylvania System of Higher Education. He moved to Virginia with his family when both he and his wife were pursuing careers in education. Scott reflected on his motivation to teach, which he believed “has changed since [he] began teaching seven years ago.” Scott’s desire for helping students when there was a breakdown in understanding reignited his passion for teaching year after year. He enjoyed “the challenge of creating lessons that will help the students become better mathematicians and learners.” Currently, Scott was in his second year of teaching fifth grade at the denied-accreditation school. Scott enjoyed the work he did with his students, as well as the time he spent working with the 24-Challenge math team. “Watching them as they grow and learn” was the motivation Scott needed to stay in the teaching profession. Scott discussed the challenges he faced throughout his teaching career such as, lack of parent involvement, disheartening school politics, and a lack of pay raises all of which he had felt would have persuaded him to leave teaching earlier in his tenure. He believed he would have “left the teaching profession after the first few years” if it was not for the excitement of watching his students grow in their knowledge and maturity.

Results

Data from the pictorial representations, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interviews were coded for recurring themes. There were a total of 31 codes with responses ranging from 1 to 131 in frequency. The code with the highest number of responses from the semi-structured individual interviews was Methods Used for Parental Involvement (131), followed by Ineffective Methods (69), Teacher Preferred Methods (66), and Barriers to Communication (51). Appendix J provides a view of an example Codes Co-occurrence table in ATLAS.ti. Table 2 shows the overall number of responses by code.

Table 2

Number of Responses by Code

Codes	Quotes
Academic Outcomes	42
Barriers to Communication	51
Communication	21
Conferences	12
Dialogue	18
Discouragement	33
Effective Methods	51
ELs	6
Frequency	13
Gender of PI	18
Ineffective Methods	69
In-Service Training	19
PI Methods Used	131
Motivation to Communicate	34
Motivation to teach	17
Negative Environment	42
Paper-Based Methods	8
Parent Reactions	34
PI Surveys	10
Positive Environment	13
Preferred Methods	66
Preservice Training	28
Routines for PI	8
School Events	21
Self-Perception	47
Student as Gatekeeper	9
Student Behavior	13
Technology	18
Turnaround Partner	9
Unpopular Methods	21
Years of Experience	16

In addition to examining the number of responses by code, various codes co-occurrence tables were created to show all codes that co-occurred across all of the primary documents. The ability to explore associations between concepts is the strength of the co-occurrence tool in ATLAS.ti. The next step was to closely examine and revisit the quotations which could add information

about the research questions and the overall concept. Data were analyzed and categorized into six themes as follows: Parent Involvement Methods, Communication, School Climate, Teacher Preparation, Teacher-Observed Effect on Students, and Barriers to Involvement. The themes for this study were developed using the phenomenological design for data analysis. Data were gathered using three methods to include pictorial representations, semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group interview of third through fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation, public elementary schools in the state of Virginia. Codes were developed through the use of bracketing, horizontalization, and clustering of themes using the ATLAS.ti coding program. This development was derived and modeled from Moustakas' (1994) method for data analysis modified from van Kaam's (1959) method of analysis.

After the coding of pictorial representations and a focus group interview transcription, 31 codes ranging from 1 to 131 in frequency of appearance throughout the data analysis. The code with the highest number of responses was Successful Methods (141), followed by School Barriers to Parent Communication (107), Reasons to Communicate (103), and Negative Environment (52). Table 3 shows how the pictorial representation codes, individual interview codes, and focus group interview codes relate to the major themes, subthemes, and research questions. School climate and teacher-described influences on students addressed the first research question; teacher preparation addressed the second research question; and parent involvement methods, communication, and barriers to involvement addressed Research Question Three. Based on the research questions and frequency of co-occurrence and occurrence, data were then clustered into the following themes: Parent Involvement Methods, Communication, School Climate, Teacher Preparation, Teacher-Observed Effect on Students, and Barriers to Involvement.

Table 3

Major Themes, Subthemes, and Related Codes with Frequency of Code Appearances

Major Themes	Subthemes	Related Codes/Frequency of Appearances
School Climate Teacher-Described Influence on Student	Negative Climate	Negative Environment (52)
	Positive Climate	Positive Environment (16)
	Student as Gatekeeper	Student Responsibility (8)
	Discouragement	Influence on Student (8) Influence on Student Academics (47) Influence on Student Behavior (12)
Teacher Preparation	Preservice Training	Higher Education Training for PI (Parent Involvement) (44)
	In-Service Training	School Professional Development (31) Turnaround Partners (13)
Parent Involvement Methods	Effective Methods	Successful Methods (141)
	Ineffective Methods	Unsuccessful Methods (36)
	Teacher Preferences	Teacher Favorites (23)
	Technology	Technology for PI (26)
Communication	Paper-Based Methods	Letters/Notes Sent Home (26)
	Communication Stimulators	Reasons to Communicate (103)
	Perceived Communication	Years of Experience (49)
	Ability	Face-to-Face Meetings (14)
Barriers to Involvement	Conferences	
	Gender	Predominant Parent Gender (43)
	Technology	Barriers to Parent Communication (107)

Theme One: Parent Involvement Methods

Parent involvement methods can be understood as the means teachers take to involve the parents of their students through academic communication. The academic communication can be achieved through the use of technology such as email as well as written methods such as notes or letters. The methods discussed included technology and paper-based approaches to involve parents in their child's behavior, academics, and academic school events. Further exploration through the semi-structured interviews uncovered the specific methods used by teachers to

involve parents. Five subthemes emerged from the data related to parent involvement methods which are as follows: effective methods, ineffective methods, teacher preferences, technology, and paper-based methods.

Effective methods. One subtheme in the area of parent involvement methods included methods that teachers found to be successful when attempting to involve parents. During the individual interview process, it became evident that teachers used a variety of methods every day to communicate with parents. During their individual interviews, I asked teachers for examples of methods used in the classroom to involve parents face-to-face or digitally. Most teachers listed: newsletters, Class Dojo, Remind101, Boomz.net, agenda notes, phone calls, classroom Facebook pages, and emails. All of the participants discussed the influence of many various methods to garner academic parental involvement. Barbara was aware that “there are so many methods available and keeping track of them is difficult,” but when she sent notes home with students she took a picture of the artifact and uploaded it to Class Dojo and sent a text through Remind101. She stated that it was “a double dose but we like to do both because sometimes with Class Dojo you can’t get into it if you don’t have the data on your phone but with Remind it’s just a text method.” Although there are innumerable parent communication methods for free and on the market, teachers like Barbara find ways to navigate through the programs and to use them efficiently. Kerry also discussed the lack of training on the translation phone for her non-native English speaker families. Kerry stated that she “frequently procrastinates when it comes to using the translation phone and talking with the parents.” She had to plan her discussion and outline the information she wanted to cover prior to using the translation phone which “can be frightening in and of itself not to mention how the parents might take the information [she] is trying to deliver.” In Figure 1, Samantha also depicted how to use various methods of parent

involvement and the outcomes of parent involvement in her pictorial representation. Samantha chose to depict various words for her choice of representation; however, certain words are capitalized differently and written in uppercase such as “planned.” The word planned implies that parent involvement and methods for parent involvement must be deliberate and used routinely.

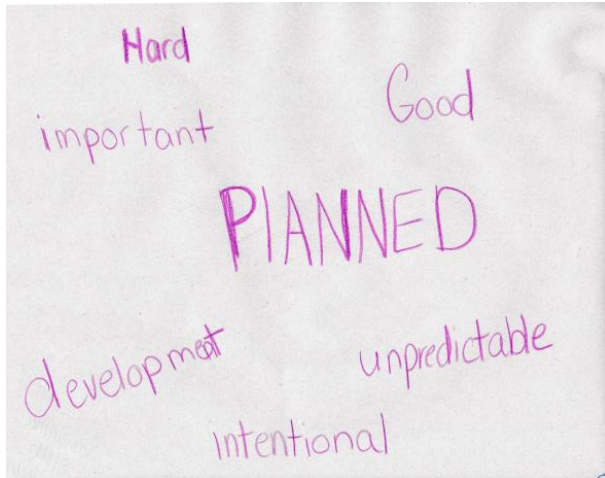


Figure 1. Samantha’s pictorial representation.

Double dosing parents through various methods is one way of making sure the information is received, but Abby used the “follow-up” method to ensure her message was heard. Her policy was that when a message is sent home that requires a signature or return message and there is doubt that it was ever received, “those are the ones I follow up with a phone call.” The “follow-up” method is successful to Abby because it “proves to the students that teachers will pay attention and shows parents that the teacher cares.”

Another way to open the doors for communication is by making sure that not every contact the teacher initiates involves bad news. Sarah utilized newsletters, emails, and a strictly class-related Facebook page “to keep [parents] apprised of what’s going on with their child” and she tried to “involve them with ways they can support their child at home so I show them that I care and they are usually much more willing to keep the communication line open.” Calling to

inform parents about positive behaviors was another method that Sarah and many of the participants in the study mentioned to be a successful method for parent involvement. “If there’s a student who’s struggling, I make sure I make that phone call as soon as possible so they can tell their parents, ‘hey, I just got a 100 on a test’ or ‘hey, I did really well on this.’” Sarah had felt that it was important for a teacher to make a positive phone call home, hopefully increasing the likelihood that a parent will be more open-minded to future positive or negative academic conversation.

Parental involvement experiences from the teachers’ perspective also arose when parents were needed in the school building to be involved academically. For schools, SOL testing is an important event where preparing the students and families beforehand can produce positive outcomes. Students in Virginia public schools do not begin taking SOLs until their third-grade year. Showing parents and students what to expect prior to taking the high-stakes test eases the students’ nerves and teaches the family how to prepare with sleep routines and hardy breakfast and lunch preparation. Samantha and Scott both encountered the same difficulties involving parents when the school offers parent SOL workshops or meetings. What they quickly found was that “the only thing that seems to get them in is if it has nothing to do with education as long as it’s a performance.” The auditorium “would be packed. It has to be child centered.” In the past, their school would host an SOL night to demonstrate to parents what the SOL tests would be like for their child or children. There was consistent low attendance, so the school administration began a competition between testing grades using “a program where you race to answer the questions and everyone gets a score...it’s very child centered and performance based, but we encourage parents to come in and be with them and help them.” On game night, parents

are allowed to assist their students. Due to the competition and game-like nature of the SOL activity, many more parents have attended to help their children and grade level win.

Building up a student-centered event that is for the benefit of the children is also one way that teachers like Scott can elicit parental involvement. He was very concerned with the amount of parent involvement he would receive when he coached a Math 24 Challenge team. His methods included phone calls and team t-shirts to boost the talk about the activity. He remembered:

I was worried whether or not students would show up because that's sort of a problem that we have at our school...So I spent a lot of time on the phone sort of begging parents to bring their kids and everybody showed up and they were wearing their [school] shirts and they were excited and they were proud.

Scott also noticed that in order to get parents in the classroom, communicating, and involved "students have to be put on display. Parents are willing to come in and that is a great way to break down some of those uncomfortable feelings." To bring parents into the school for face-to-face communication they have

students participating in sort of like a jeopardy type situation as a whole class so we're trying to shift to put the focus on putting kids on display...then we can try to help [the parents] with the things the workshops and conferences were originally going to help them with.

At Scott's school, allowing students to be the focus was a successful method to open up a positive dialogue with parents benefiting the student, parent, and teacher.

Another program that Scott's school was piloting during the 2016-2017 school year was student-led, parent-teacher conferences. The conferences involved switching the roles of teacher

and student for a new way of conveying information. Switching the roles allowed students to take control of the conversation and discuss strengths and weaknesses.

So rather than the parent coming in and sitting down with the teacher who is somewhat of an authority figure...they're going to sit down with their kid and then that gives the kid an authentic audience for their work too.

Thus far, he had felt that the student-led, parent-teacher conferences method was successful, and more parents listened to their children and opened up to follow-up comments from the teacher. Patrick's school had also employed the use of student-led conferences which he stated "took a lot more time, training, and effort from the teachers than a normal parent-teacher conference ever would." He described the professional development training teachers received on student-led conferences as well as the amount of class time he had to devote to pre-conferencing with students to prepare for the student-led conferences. "It just doesn't happen without effort and time to prepare unless you want a fruitless student-led conference. You have to prepare the student ahead of time and that takes away from our valuable instruction time."

Danielle summed up successful parental involvement methods when she commented on how different each year can be, "Each year families and students are different when it comes to effective methods." She compared last year when she rarely had two parents willing to communicate with her to this year with many more parents reinforcing the theme:

I have found that this year I have a lot of parents that are calling me to check things out just to see or emailing me, that's a change from last year and I probably have four or five that I'm in contact with at least once a week with them checking on how things are or how their child's doing or I haven't seen any homework lately.

Volunteer day was a method to involve parents by getting them inside the school.

It was like once a month or twice a month and the teachers could turn in things they needed done like laminating...and [parents] come for two or three hours and work on this stuff and that would be just to get them inside the school. Once they're in the school I think they enjoy being here.

Danielle felt that it was necessary to allow parents to be involved inside the school and to open the doors to two-way communication in order to see results from the students.

During the focus group interview session, the participants were asked to respond to the following statements grounded in data analysis from the individual semi-structured interviews on successful parental involvement methods: The best way to create parent involvement is to highlight the children in a positive way and the best methods for contacting parents are technological. All of the focus group interview participants described writing in agendas and sending home notes using email and Class Dojo as the primary means to produce meaningful two-way communication with parents. Five out of the five focus group interview participants agreed that "sometimes it depends on the type of people you have" and what works one year for one group of parents might not work for the next group of parents. The focus group agreed that assessing what works and using it consistently can streamline the communication between the parent and teacher throughout the year.

Ineffective methods. The second subtheme to parent involvement methods described methods that teachers at each denied-accreditation elementary school attempted to use but were ineffective at opening lines of communication between the parent and teacher. The ineffective methods of parent involvement differed between teachers and schools; however, a few common methods that schools and teachers attempted to use and found to be unsuccessful were shared between various locations. The ineffective methods included: Parent Teacher Organization

(PTA) meetings that took place between the hours of five and six o'clock; offering food, prizes, and raffles in an attempt to attract parents; telephone calls; giving notes to the child to send home; and conducting family workshops. Chrystal also relived her experiences of staying late to contact parents and plan for activities. She admitted that she

never expected to have it easy as a teacher but [she] hoped that something good would come of the late nights and extra effort. But when you have unreturned phone calls and parents you have never met, it doesn't always seem worth it.

Scott described his experience with the family workshops during the beginning of the school year which was unsuccessful in his opinion:

We had originally, at the beginning of the year, scheduled a series of family workshops trying to give families opportunities to sort of learn how to help their students be successful in school and we found out at the beginning of the year that when we called it a parent workshop, even if there's food, even if it's well prepared, the teachers far outnumbered the families that showed up.

He described that the lack of parent involvement prompted the administration to restructure the parent involvement and change the way it was presented to families.

Contacting parents by telephone or cell phone also proved to be an unsuccessful method with specific families or parents. Although phone calls can be a successful method of contact as stated previously by various participants, phone calls can also be unsuccessful for some families. When parents responded to phone calls, made return phone calls, and had available voice mailboxes, telephone or cell phone contact was considered an effective method. However, when parents did not own a phone, did not respond to phone calls or voice mails, teachers considered it an ineffective method. The participants agreed that differentiation of contact methods is

necessary to meet the various needs of the families. Teachers who only reach out through the use of a telephone or cell phone to parents who do not respond to phone calls can find this method extremely unsuccessful if there are no other methods to try for the family or other methods have already failed. Clara described the experience as “disheartening” at first. She shared the following experiences and how they affected her perception of parent involvement at her denied accreditation elementary school:

I guess in the beginning it was disheartening, trying to reach out to parents and not having them respond or trying to call a parent about a student and the phone number not working. You find ways around that of course, you go to the nurse and find a contact number for an emergency contact and just go from there. But when you have 20 kids in a class sometimes depending on the year it can get a little overwhelming to do that much digging.

Clara’s school did not allow teachers to call parents from their personal telephones or cellular phones so the only time for Clara called was during the school day or while she was in the building before or after school. When she did receive phone calls, they were during the school day while she was teaching and could not respond. Chrystal also discussed her experience of calling families after school and beyond contracted school hours. Chrystal stated that “it’s just easier to stay late to talk to the parent even when I work 45 minutes away from home.” Chrystal chose to draw this experience in her pictorial representation in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Chrystal's pictorial representation

Scott also noted that sometimes the phone calls made the situation worse. Many times he would call in the beginning of the year to say something positive about a student; however, “it’s not always possible to break through some of [the] authority issues...before you have to call with something negative and there have been scenarios where the parent phone call makes it worse.” Scott feared that calling over the phone to deliver negative information about someone’s child created a combative relationship with some parents where any further experiences with parent involvement were negative as well.

Money spending methods, such as raffle prizes and food along with messages delivered over the phone, were found to be the most ineffective methods of parental involvement that also created a negative experience for teachers. Many of the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers provided examples of parent workshop nights aimed at informing parents of the SOL tests that their children would experience. Their efforts yielded little to no involvement at the workshops. Danielle and Samantha described the low numbers of attendees at workshop-type programs after school. They both experienced the failure of food and raffle ticket prizes which Danielle stated “were a waste of money and never served as an incentive to come to the school program.” When

personal money and time is invested in a parental involvement activity with low success rates, it is not only seen as ineffective but disheartening as well.

Teacher preferences. Teacher-preferred methods were a third subtheme of parent involvement methods. Preferences in parent involvement refer to the teachers' greater liking for one alternative over another in the form of communication. These preferences include what a teacher considers as ideal academic parental involvement in the area of frequency, method, approach. Many of the teachers had felt there was a lack of academic parental involvement in regards to meaningful two-way communication either in person or via technology.

Barbara discussed her receptiveness to parents frequenting the classroom to observe the student, class, or the content. She was willing to put aside her reservations of parents in the classroom in order for students to understand the importance of education when she stated:

I don't mind a bit for a parent to sit in my room, see what's going on. I'm fine with that.

Don't interact with other children but you know if you want to see what's going on or if you want to have a conversation with your kid about what's going on that's perfectly

fine. I would like for there to be more parent involvement because I think that matters for kids to see 'Hey, this is important for me to get an education.'

Barbara understood that "actions must match words." Students observe the actions of the parents and teachers supporting one another when parents are welcomed into the classroom and communicating with the classroom teacher.

Scott also had specific preferences when it came to academic parental involvement. Scott preferred a parent who communicates with the teacher "in order to celebrate what his or her student accomplishes." He understood that celebrating accomplishments "creates students who are confident and know that they have somebody...interested in their successes." Samantha's

preferences were similar to Scott's. Samantha's experiences of parental involvement were shaped by parents who trusted and supported her choices and decisions. She preferred "any parent who asks what they can do instead of either assuming that they know what's best or not wanting to be involved would be the ideal display of academic parent involvement."

When it comes to the method of parental involvement, most teachers did not have a preferred method. It appeared that every teacher had been willing to reach out through whatever means necessary to accommodate parents. Danielle stated that she liked "the parents that are checking the agendas and writing me a note if there is a concern." A shared partnership of sending and receiving through technology or handwritten notes appeared to be the most preferred method of academic parental involvement by third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation elementary schools

Technology. Another subtheme discussed by participants explored the use of technology as a method for involvement. Technology tended to be effective or ineffective depending on the participant; however, one thing remained the same, technology was used by every participant as a method for parent involvement.

For many of the participants, technological contact using phone, email, and apps sufficed during the interim of conferences and open house. Technological two-way communication included phone calls and internet methods. Most teachers preferred face-to-face contact during open house, parent teacher conferences, and school events; however, technology for education is readily available and suggested for use by most of the participants' schools. Some of the technology included Blooms.net, Class Dojo, Remind 101, emails, phone calls, classroom Facebook, and translation phone for English Learners (ELs).

One of the topics that each teacher agreed on during the focus group interview was that “a lot of parents don’t have technology, laptops at home, or home computers.” The teachers were sympathetic to the fact that a lot of the parents did not have phones, or if they did have a cell phone they had limited data to use. A data plan, which is offered by phone carriers, allows the users to access the Internet; however, data plans come at a cost depending on the size of data and the mobile carrier. Some of the technology programs teachers chose to employ for communication can be accessed through the mobile phone but would use data that some families may not have. Remind101 utilizes text messaging to communicate and does not expend phone data. Many teachers have changed to programs such as Remind101 to be considerate of families and costs.

Even without a data plan, many times, phone numbers have been disconnected “or their voice mailboxes are full and that makes it even harder to try and get in contact with [parents].” Therefore, technology serves as both an effective and ineffective method of parent involvement. It can be successful when parents have access to technology for communication but unsuccessful when they do not have access to various types of useful technology.

Paper-based methods. The final subtheme for parent involvement methods described by participants was the paper-based methods used across all participating denied-accreditation schools to elicit parents’ involvement. Although there are drawbacks to solely using technology to communicate meaningfully with parents, there are also drawbacks to paper-based methods where the student acts as the gatekeeper between the teacher and the parent. Focus Group Participant B stated:

I guess giving notes is not the most ideal way. It’s not one-to-one. There’s [kind of] a barrier in the middle which is the child and if the child decides to rip up the notes and

throw it away on the bus and out the window it happens. I've seen that happen because they didn't want their parent to get the note or whatever they think it is even if they don't know what it says.

Other paper methods for communicating with parents included class newsletters, paper notes, and notes written in the students' agendas. Study guides also served as a way to effectively communicate with parents regarding the academic standards being taught in the classroom. Although there is not a required parental response to newsletters and study guides, there is evidence of receiving the message when parents reinforce at home the information contained in the study guides and newsletters. Samantha holds these types of paper-based communications in high regard because:

When I send home a study guide are you paying attention to it because that's telling you what your kid is learning at the time? So I think in that sense if there's not an initial buy in then I think that can negatively impact their education.

For families that may not have daily access to technology, paper-based communication such as letters, newsletters, study guides, and notes serve as an essential method of communication.

Theme Two: Communication

Communication can be described as the meaningful, two-way dialogue that occurs between the teacher and the parent with parent involvement as the goal. Bakhtin posited that communication stems from internally persuasive discourse and requires tension through social interactions and conflict among various speakers (Bakhtin, 1986; Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Communication cannot rely on singular disconnected statements, but rather many statements that interact via carriers over a shared event (Bakhtin, 1986; Sidorkin, 2002). The subthemes of communication focus on what successfully and unsuccessfully motivates teachers and parents to

communicate and increase their communication. Communication involves written or spoken messages sent back and forth between sender and receiver. The study participants agreed that open communication is necessary for beneficial academic parental involvement experiences at their denied-accreditation schools. Three subthemes from the experiences of teachers emerged from the data related to communication which are as follows: communication stimulators, perceived communication ability, and conferences.

Communication stimulators. Communication stimulators refer to the motives of teachers and parents to conduct meaningful, two-way transfer of information between the sender and the receiver. Teachers are motivated to communicate with parents for various reasons. The first face-to-face or telephone communication occurs at the beginning of the school year to generate a personable and positive rapport with parents. At that time, teachers introduce themselves, the grade level expectations, as well as positive behaviors the teacher observed from the student. Most school districts require a first contact from teachers while other districts strongly suggest teachers make contact with parents during the first month of the school year. During the focus group interview, all teachers stated that they intentionally reached out to parents to build a positive rapport with the student and family regardless of other behaviors during the first weeks of school. The focus group unanimously agreed that a phone call home was necessary in order to introduce oneself to the family and to express the teacher's goals for the student. The teachers acknowledged the need to create a level of trust between teachers, families, and students.

Throughout the remainder of the year, communication stimulators differ between various third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools. In order for teachers to create positive experiences of parental involvement, teachers send out multiple means of

communication stimulated by the need to keep parents apprised of their students' academics, events, and behaviors. Sarah's motivation for communication stems from the need "to keep them apprised of what's going on with their child." As a classroom teacher, Sarah utilized newsletters and a school-approved Facebook page so that parents "can support their child at home since there's not a lot of in-school support." Sarah recognized that the parents of her children were busy during school hours or could not attend school-hour events. She wanted to make sure the parents of her students could view school activities through pictures and articles posted in newsletters and on a school Facebook page.

The behavior of the student is another stimulator for communication initiated by the teacher. Danielle called a parent every week "to tell them something good that the child has done." She wanted to ensure that students understood that not every phone call home contained a negative message. Danielle reminded students, "Make sure your mom or dad picks up that phone because I could be calling you this week, it might be you I'm calling." Although Danielle spent a lot of her time after school calling families, she understood that her time and effort would reinforce positive behaviors in her classroom.

Positive behavior and school events are not the only stimulators that cause teachers to communicate with parents. Unfortunately, poor behavior requires communication between teacher and parent. Sarah balanced her communication for each student to guarantee that parents received phone calls or emails when their child had a successful day or a challenging day. Sarah reflected on specific experiences:

If it's poor behavior, I'm contacting the parents to make them aware of what's going on with their student. I know in the past week, I had a child who was lying and I wanted to make sure the parent knew exactly what had happened so she could parent that at home,

but also positive behaviors. If there's a student who is struggling I make sure I make that phone call as soon as possible so he or she can tell the parents [he or she] just got a 100 on a test or...did really well.

Sarah, along with the focus group participants, agreed that a balance of communication stimulators was necessary to have a positive experience for parental involvement and a strong academic school year.

Perceived communication ability. Each participant had his or her own perception of communication ability. Based on the overall interviews and the focus group interview, preservice and in-service trainings, as well as years of experience, affected perceived communication ability. Samantha considered herself an “educational tweener.” She was not in her 40s or 50s, but she was not newly out of college. Samantha described her perceived ability of parent involvement when explaining:

I think I could do a better job with it but it's hard. It's very hard to coordinate parents who want to be involved with how to use them when I'm also trying to coordinate 20-some kids on a daily basis especially in an SOL [tested] grade. So it's hard.

The pressure to coordinate parents, inform them of school events, and notify them of their child's behavior can create a negative experience for teachers when balancing parent-involvement methods.

Two participants, Danielle and Scott, both attributed their perceived parent involvement ability to a wealth of experiences in college and in the classroom. Danielle spent a lot of time in the classroom observing and teaching during the four years of her undergraduate education. She believed she “had a lot more interaction with parents than a lot of people...even [her] first year of teaching because [she] had done it a lot.” Danielle's preservice education offered more

opportunities to practice communication with parents, whereas Scott's communication experience with parents began when he was hired by a school district and started teaching in his own classroom.

Scott differed from Danielle who received her parental involvement experience during her undergraduate education. Scott's parent involvement experience started when he began his full-time teaching career; however, he still had a positive self-perception of his ability to communicate with parents when he stated, "I feel like where I've gotten to now, with parent involvement, has mostly been learned through trial and error in the classroom rather than learning it before I became a teacher in any of my training at university." Experiences communicating over the phone or face-to-face serve as a means to gain confidence when involving parents in their child's academic education.

Similar to Scott, Focus Group Participant A perceived a growth in her ability of sending information to and receiving information from parents which she attributed to experience. Her initial experiences were very difficult when she stated:

I have many years of experience now, but when I first started I didn't think I could communicate very well. I didn't know how to say certain things. I was very intimidated by the parents and I was hesitant to explain what was going on so I really steered away from trying to communicate at all. I would return phone calls but I usually wouldn't make any phone calls, especially the hard ones unless something really bad happened. But just to tell the parent that their child was acting up or caused a problem, I really wouldn't call. I would try and handle it in the classroom because I didn't want to confront the parent.

Focus Group Participant A had a negative experience with parental involvement due to a lack of experience communicating with parents and guardians.

Similar to Focus Group Participant A, Barbara shared in her individual interview that she continued to have a negative self-perception of talking on the telephone with parents. Barbara, a veteran teacher, felt as if she continued to struggle when talking on the telephone even though she had positive relationships with families. Barbara explained:

I struggle still with like talking on the telephone and things so I was just telling a couple of my friends on Facebook, I sound like an idiot on the phone. I know my parents are like 'I am so sorry I sent my kid with her' but I try to write down what I'm going to say but sometimes I get a little off track or things like that but I feel like overall, overall I have a pretty good repertoire with my parents who I speak to regularly. The majority of my kids I probably never met a parent for. But I think I've gotten through practice to where I'm pretty good at diffusing situations.

A teacher's self-perception of his or her communication abilities can affect how elementary teachers experience parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools. All schools participating in the study have a school policy that requires or strongly recommends teacher-parent communication over the phone as well as face-to-face; however, not all teachers are comfortable with the task and their self-perception affects the value of their communication. When messages are not sent clearly from sender to receiver, a negative experience occurs, which potentially deters further communication efforts for parent involvement.

Conferences. Open house and parent-teacher conferences are tasks that transpire throughout the school year. Depending on the school and district policy, there are various ways teachers are asked to confer with parents. For example, some school policies do not allow

teachers to call parents from personal phone numbers while other schools allow teachers to call from home or personal cell phones. Permitted by her school, Danielle relies on a personal phone number or staying late at the school to call parents from the school if they cannot attend conferences. Danielle's parent-teacher conference experiences vary between specified times and full-day conferences:

We start conferences right after school and go until 6:30pm or 7:00pm...any other time you want to do conferences then it is after school or sometimes I do it during planning time if I know that I can get the parent in and out before planning time is over and I do a lot...I have a lot of phone conferences at night from my home phone because they're still working when I'm here and I can't wait for you to get off work so I do a lot phone conferences.

Focus group interview participants also found it difficult to encourage parents to attend face-to-face conferences. One participating school was piloting student-led conferences for teachers, parents, and students. Scott, a teacher at the student-led conference pilot school, was interested in the success of the practice when he stated:

I think some of the grades are going to pilot the student led parent-teacher conferences.

So rather than the parent coming in and sitting down with the teacher who is somewhat of an authority figure, viewed as an authority figure to them, they're going to sit down with their kid. Then that gives the kid...an authentic audience for their work too. So, I think just putting kids on display is what we're really trying to do.

Putting students on display and allowing them to lead the conference can create a positive experience for both teacher and parent.

Abby found that some conferences may be difficult to conduct when students are not leading a conference and when the teacher is viewed as an authority figure. Abby noted that at her school, the student oftentimes accompanies the parent to parent-teacher conferences. When the student is present, Abby has experienced that “there really isn’t the ability to have free on-going speech during that time.” She believed that “parents should come alone so that there can be really good interaction between the teacher and the parent.” Including the student during adult conversation can make it difficult for the adults to converse freely without fear of damaging the child’s psyche or upsetting the parent. Figure 3 depicts a parent-teacher conference with a parent and child as well as a confused teacher.

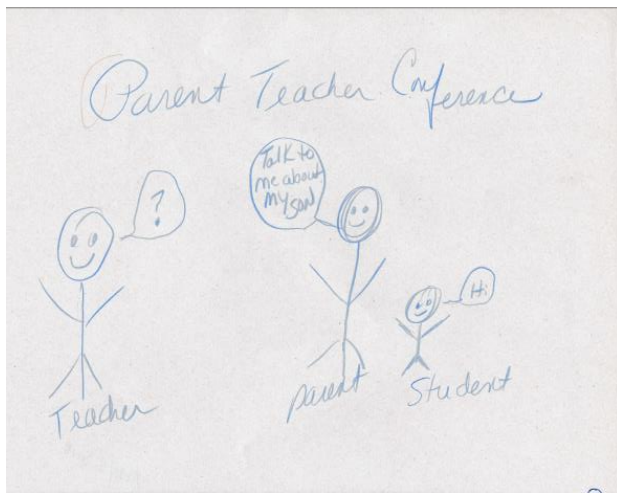


Figure 3. Abby’s pictorial representation.

Barbara and her team of teachers were able to find a solution to communicating openly when a student is present. In order to create a positive and meaningful two-way communication experience, Barbara’s team determined who watches the student in another area separate from the conference. Barbara explained:

We usually conference as a team because we’re four teachers who teach fourth grade and three, any three of us, will have that student so the one that does not have the student will

take the kids somewhere else...so you can have a conference. We usually try that so that you can have those hard conversations. But sometimes we have those hard conversations there too if we feel like the parent's going to be supportive of what we say.

Occasionally, it is beneficial to have the student present during a conference so he or she can provide a statement adding to the interaction. If the child is meant to receive a message during the adult conferences, the parent and teacher can also confirm that the message was received correctly.

Theme Three: School Climate

School climate is defined by the National School Climate Center (NSCC, 2017) as “the quality and character of school life” (para 3). The school’s climate “is based on patterns of students’, parents’, and school personnel’s experience of school life” (para. 3). Getzels and Guba (1957) theorized that a school, as an institution, operated best when the demands of the institution and demands of the staff are productive and individually fulfilling (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015). School climate quality can affect school, student, and staff productivity and satisfaction. A positive school climate fosters engagement and respect as well as collaboration of students, families, and educators to create a shared school vision (NSCC, 2017). Positive climate also “decreases rates of teacher turnover, improves teacher satisfaction, and facilitates the turnaround of low-performing schools” (Impact, 2017, para. 2). A negative school climate is created by risky behaviors and high rates of student suspensions and discipline issues which have “been shown to exacerbate harmful behaviors and diminish achievement” (Impact, 2017, para. 4). Negative school climate “facilitates opportunities for bullying, violence, and even suicide” (Impact, 2017, para. 5). Overall, school climate can determine the amount of parent involvement an entire school or classroom will receive. Conversely, the climate of the building and the

classroom can originate from the amount of involvement parents bring to the building. The subthemes for school climate arose during the interviews when participants described their experiences during face-to-face events such as open house, conferences, and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)/PTA meetings. Parent involvement effect on school climate determined how the participants chose to involve and utilize the parents. Two subthemes emerged from the data related to school climate: negative climate effect and positive climate effect.

Negative climate. An overall classroom or school climate is “the prevailing mood, attitudes, standards, and tone that [the teacher] and...students felt when they are in [the] classroom” (Committee for Children, 2012, para. 1). A negative climate can create chaos and hostility for the teachers and students. The participants discussed that a lack of parent involvement can create or exacerbate an already negative classroom climate.

Focus Group Participant D agreed that teachers may create a closed-door space that sets the tone for a lack of parent involvement while Focus Group Participant C disagreed. Focus Group Participant C stated:

I think sometimes we don't realize as teachers, professionals, and administrators who have a job to do that we might create an environment that seems like we don't have time for the parents or that we don't want the parents around or that they'll get in the way.

Focus Group Participant D had a very different version of how parents can set the tone and climate in the school or classroom. Focus Group Participant D stated:

I agree with that in the classroom part because I've tried to use ways to involve parents with their children, myself, and learning and the kids almost become discouraged when they see that their parents aren't invested.

Focus Group Participant B agreed with the disappointment she observed on the face of her student when the student realized his or her parent did not attend the event, participate in the activity, or was not invested in the learning process while other students' parents were present.

Many of the teachers questioned and hypothesized why parents do not want to be involved inside of the school. When the focus group interview participants were given the statement “distrust is one of the main barriers to parent involvement,” Focus Group Participant C stated that “our parents don’t really trust our school.” The focus group interview participant was asked to elaborate on the response. She added that many parents shy away from academic events due to their own past experiences at the current school or another school. Scott’s pictorial representation of a parent’s negative view of the school as an institution is depicted in Figure 4. This drawing shows scared parents standing at the bottom of a hill from school at the top of the hill. The school is dark and has storm clouds above it with a character questioning why the parents will not go up the hill to visit the school



Figure 4. Scott’s pictorial representation

Negative classroom climates can also occur through various forms of media. During the semi-structured individual interviews, Barbara discussed a parent who gave her “a big cussin’ for probably a good 15 minutes” over the telephone. She recalled it was due to a district-wide

standardized test score. She also described parents who came to the school “irate, angry, yelling, and cussing in front of the tutoring kids.” Entering a school with a negative attitude only spreads more negativity to those students and adults who are in the vicinity to experience it. Figure 5 shows Barbara’s pictorial representation of the changes in parent involvement depending on the situation and time of year.

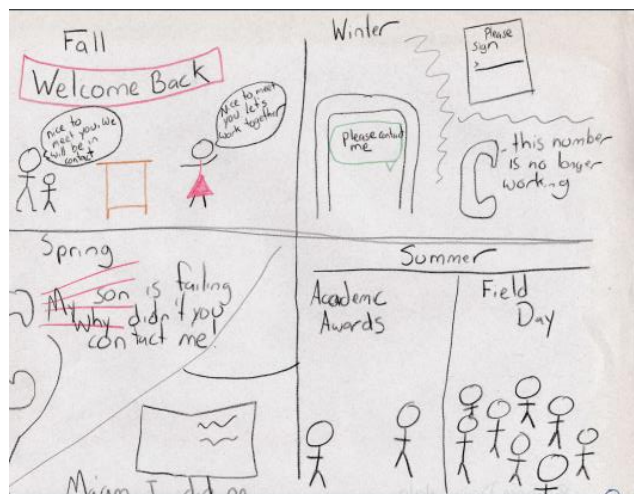


Figure 5. Barbara’s pictorial representation

During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked what they thought motivated parents to contact teachers. Each participant stated that parents contacted teachers when parents believed that the teachers had done something wrong. Sarah stated that “the biggest thing is when there’s something wrong; they’re immediately calling. I think that’s the first gut reaction.” Scott also agreed but focused mainly on anger as the antecedent to parent-teacher communication and parent involvement at his denied accreditation school. Scott stated:

What motivates [parents] to contact me often is anger or something that they feel was unfair. I can honestly not think of a single time in the past two years...that I had a parent contact me with an academic concern or a concern about report cards grades whereas in the other schools I taught at where on report card day at night I knew I would be getting

20 emails and the next day 15 phone calls. I've never had a single concern about that. So typically, if I get a phone call from a parent I sort of get an 'oh no, what's this going to be?' and it typically is something negative.

Although communication can create a negative climate in the school or classroom, appropriate communication can also foster a positive climate.

Positive climate. A positive classroom or school climate creates feelings of safety, respect, and support (Committee for Children, 2012). A positive climate can support learning and confidence (Committee for Children, 2012). Focus Group Participant B described a survey she had created to determine what subject areas parents were willing to aid in and what jobs parents could perform to simplify the teacher's school day. The survey cleared up communication and created a much more inclusive climate in her classroom.

Samantha noted the necessary buy-in to create a positive classroom climate where parents were involved; she stated:

When I send home a study guide, are [parents] paying attention to it because that's telling you what your kid is learning at the time. So I think that that sense if there's not an initial buy in then I think that can negatively impact their education. Behavior is 100% parent teacher communication.

In addition to academics, Samantha noticed that a positive classroom climate can also affect behavior. These perceptions of various climates helped to answer the first research question asking: How do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation schools describe their experiences with academic parental involvement? Teachers' descriptions of their experiences with academic parent involvement at their school explored through the theme of

school climate describe how school climate can negatively or positively affect teachers' experiences.

Theme Four: Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation relates to the amount of instruction teachers receive during their college years and again as professionals in the education field. Preservice preparation refers to instruction teachers receive during college years in a teacher education program. In-service preparation is the professional development offered by schools to continually educate and inform their teachers. The subthemes for teacher preparation relate directly to Research Question Two which investigates the effect of preservice and in-service training to foster parent involvement each year at the denied-accreditation schools. Staying apprised of new and evaluated methods of academic parent involvement is a responsibility of colleges, universities, school divisions, and teachers. Two subthemes emerged from the data related to teacher preparation which are as follows: preservice training and in-service training.

Preservice training. Preservice training is the instruction that teachers receive while in teacher preparation courses. Each participant commented on his or her preservice training which was revisited in depth when responding to Research Question Two. All teachers stated that there was a lack of education for parent involvement. Participants of the study stated that no explicit classes were offered on parent involvement and communication methods between teachers and parents. The focus group interview participants did agree that a specific class on communication theory or parent involvement methods would have improved their confidence once employed by a school division.

In-service training. In-service training refers to the training that full-time teachers receive from a school division. Some school divisions utilize their own professionals such as

principals, curriculum writers, and specialists to deliver education workshops. Some school divisions employ professionals from outside the district to present and educate the staff on specific topics. Each participant commented on his or her in-service training which was revisited in depth when responding to Research Question Two.

At Danielle's school, a turnaround partner provided in-service training on parent involvement and communication; however, she really thought they "could benefit for some more though, [she] thinks that [teachers] can always benefit from more." In Virginia, a turnaround partner or lead turnaround partner is an organization hired by a school district to increase teacher and leader effectiveness (VDOE, 2017). The goal of a turnaround partner is to raise academic ability in order to meet or exceed academic benchmark scores set by the state. Turnaround partners work with the teachers to provide them with teaching techniques and feedback.

Scott's school did not utilize a turnaround partner but, due to their state accreditation rating, had instead created a corrective action plan. A corrective action plan is a document created by a school committee that outlines how continuous improvement will be made and evaluation measures that will confirm when improvement is made. These plans are then sent to the Virginia Board of Education for approval and monitoring. One focus, within their corrective action plan, was family involvement. The teachers worked together in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) which is a group of educators that meet regularly, share their knowledge, and work collaboratively on a shared goal or focus (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). Scott explained the parent involvement component of the corrective action plan as:

A focus of our school and we work on it as a grade levels in PLC's and we try to be creative in the things we can do to get families into the school. We have a schoolwide committee that also is focusing on just getting families into the school so any training we

get is more informal and about professionals working together rather than a formal training or in-service.

Samantha is on the same committee with Scott and understands it to be a “committee that focuses on students, teachers, and family involvement.” Samantha stated that they “try to plan things and incorporate parents into any aspects [they] can.” Overall, she had felt they should be doing more; however, it was a new committee for the school. This information aids in answering the second research question which sought to determine what preservice and in-service experiences foster academic parental involvement for third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia.

Theme Five: Teacher-Observed Effect on Student

The teacher-observed effect on student was an essential theme in this study because student achievement or lack thereof affects how students perform on the Virginia SOL assessments. Many participants referred to some students as “bubble students” during their semi-structured interviews. “Bubble students” are students who are progressing towards academic proficiency but have not yet scored at the proficient level on state standardized tests. Participants discussed the “bubble students” to show that even minimal support from a parent at home can encourage students to break through the bubble and progress to a proficient or advanced level in various subject areas. The SOL subject performance level descriptors for students include: fail/below basic, fail/basic, pass/proficient, and pass/advanced. Percentages of the grade level performance level scores contribute to determining the overall school rating. Participating teachers referred to academic parental involvement positively affecting academic subject mastery by helping those “bubble students” who are close to achieving a pass/proficient or a pass/advanced score with support from home and school. The subthemes for the teacher-

observed effect on student also help teachers determine what has worked in the classroom and what did not produce a positive effect on the student. Two subthemes emerged from the data related to the teacher-observed effect on student which are as follows: discouragement and student as gatekeeper.

Discouragement. When there was a lack of parent involvement, all of the participants conveyed a feeling of discouragement not only for themselves but also for the students they taught. Many of the participants stated their disappointment factually but using body language and emotionally-charged terminology when discussing the disappointment they saw on their students' faces. The focus group interview teachers exemplified this when Focus Group Participant D admitted to being reluctant to involve parents in communication about events and classroom news because “the kids almost become discouraged as well when they see that their parents...aren’t invested.” Focus Group Participant B added onto the statement when explaining that she “hate(s) to see that look on a kids face when they realize that their parent was one of twenty-five that didn’t help out or didn’t do what we had asked them to do.” The pictorial representation, Figure 6, drawn by Sarah depicts the parent not crossing the boundary between home and school.



Figure 6. Sarah’s pictorial representation

During her individual interview, Barbara also recalled a time with a student when the parent did not attend a school event that he or she was invited to attend. Barbara's school and grade level staged a play where the kids helped by painting a set and designing costumes with scrap fabric. There were 52 students involved in the school play and 10 parents attended. As a teacher, Barbara was reluctant to allow her students to participate in future school events due to the lack of parental attendance and the amount of money and time she invested into the play. She couldn't remember her personal monetary contribution or the time she invested; however, more than anything, she remembered one particular student's disappointment. She recalled:

I remember the little girl who was Dorothy from my group because we did them separately. She wanted her mom to come so bad because I had [bought] her little ruby slippers. She was so proud of these ruby slippers and her mom had told her she was going to be there. She didn't show and she was so tore up about that. I was like, 'well, I got it on video and I'll send it to her.'

Barbara recounted the experience and stated that "it's hard to put yourself out like that and allow students to get hurt and discouraged." The personal disappointment that Barbara felt from a lack of parent involvement was only exacerbated by witnessing the same disappointment on the faces of her students.

Student as gatekeeper. All participants listed sending home newsletters, letters, and notes to parents through the student. Students are typically the gatekeepers of the information meant to be received by parents. During the focus group interview, Focus Group Participant D recognized that "giving notes is not the most ideal way." Focus Group Participant D continued to state that:

It's not one to one. There's [kind of] a barrier in the middle which is the child and if the child decides to rip up the note and throw it away on the bus and out the window it happens. I've seen that happen because they didn't want their parent to get the note or whatever they think it is even if they don't know what it is.

Focus Group Participant C agreed that “having to go through the child is probably not the best way but unfortunately it's usually the best way to contact parents.” All of the focus group interview participants nodded in agreement but stated that they did not know how to fix it or remove the responsibility from the students.

During Abby's interview, she stated that using emails to communicate with and involve parents removes the student as a gatekeeper. Also, now with cell phones, students cannot delete voicemail messages. When Abby did send home letters and fliers, her method was “to follow up with a phone call if needed.” Abby discussed knowing when parents reviewed information that was sent home and when they did not see what was sent home. If a note does not come back signed or without any parent response she followed up with a phone call to the parent.

Theme Six: Barriers to Involvement

Barriers to involvement was the final theme that arose from the clustering of codes. Barriers to involvement refers to the obstacles that break down meaningful, two-way communication. Clustering of codes was applied to the coded data in ATLAS.ti to clarify the findings of the numerous barriers that obstructed effective academic parent involvement between teacher and parent. Teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement depend greatly on effective communication methods as well as finding ways to circumvent the barriers that prevent parents from being involved in their child's education. During individual interviews, teachers listed various barriers they encountered throughout their teaching careers preventing

physical or digital communication with parents. The barriers preventing meaningful parent involvement affected the participants' experiences within their elementary schools. In addition to the barriers, overcoming the obstacles also affected the participants' experiences of parent involvement at denied-accreditation schools. The two subthemes that emerged for barriers to involvement included: gender and technology.

Gender. The gender of the parent was a pertinent subtopic in two of the individual interviews when discussing parents who were involved in communication with the classroom teacher. Both participants discussed the gender of the parents they had the most interaction with and the gender of the parents that were less likely to communicate with the teacher. The teachers based this information on their experiences as veteran teachers at their denied-accreditation schools.

Scott was the first participant to specifically mention the gender of parent he actively communicated with through parent-scheduled telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings. During his discussion regarding combative parents, he mentioned that it was a mother. I asked Scott what gender he found to be the most "combative" which was a term he had used earlier in the interview. He stated that "all of the parents are the mothers. I met two dads this year." He continued to explain that there were very few men consistently involved in the lives of the students at his school and in his classroom.

During Samantha's individual interview she also noted that most of the communication was with the mothers when she communicated with parents. From her third-grade teaching experiences at her school, she noted that there were very few males who made phone calls or attended conferences. Samantha stated:

I've never honestly, in the 12 years of teaching, had a male ask to come in and to be involved in the classroom. They have come in to...eat lunch but they never said, 'Hey, can I come in' and take the initiative.

Samantha also noted that the most common parents were not only mothers but also grandmothers. In her opinion, grandmothers may not have been listed as primary caregivers but were involved equally as much as the mothers, especially if mothers worked full-time professions.

Technology. Technology was consistently mentioned as a common theme for methods of involvement as well as a barrier to parent involvement throughout the individual interviews and the focus group interview. Although many participants discussed their experiences with technology use for parent involvement, they also saw it as a barrier that could break down parent involvement. Pictorial representation, Figure 7, drawn by Danielle shows the three main methods that she chose to use or recognized for parent involvement. Two of those methods involve technology.



Figure 7. Danielle's pictorial representation

The focus group interview participants discussed technology as a barrier to parent involvement. As a whole, each member of the focus group interview stated that they used technology to involve parents since there are various programs and applications such as Remind101, Class Dojo, and Bloomz.net. Focus Group Participant A discussed the positives and negatives by stating, “I think that contacting parents through technology is the way of new and the future, but I don’t think all of our parents have caught up to that yet.” Focus Group Participant B agreed because in the district, “a lot of the parents don’t have technology, laptops at home, or home computers. They might have a cell phone but even that sometimes depending on data and it’s hard for them to use.” Differentiation of technology communication methods for individual families was the key for Focus Group Participant E, who stated:

It seems really that writing in agendas, sending home notes, those really seem to be what works and gets the parents attention. Emails sometimes work but that's only for certain parents so I guess you [kind of] have to figure out who uses what technology or lack thereof.

In the course of individual interviews, each participant described his or her experience of experimenting with technology; however, they also noted that it could become a barrier to parent involvement if teachers were not willing to vary their methods for individual families. The participants described the experience of differentiating the communication technology from year to year. The experiences were not favorable because differentiating technology each year and for each family required the teachers to create surveys, send them home, follow-up with unreturned surveys, and finally prepare each technology application with the information to communicate with the families.

Preparation. Teacher preparation for working with parents was the final barrier to parent involvement as experienced by the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers. Teachers discussed their preservice and in-service preparation experiences or lack thereof for involving parents during the interview. Preparation also reappeared as a theme when discussing the teachers' perceived barriers to parent involvement. The focus group interview participants shared their experiences of being inexperienced teachers and fearing communicating with parents for the first time. There was no reference regarding mentor teachers during the individual or focus group interview. Focus Group Participant A noted that experience gained from working with parents made future communications easier and that practice could have been introduced earlier in teacher preparation courses. Focus Group Participant A stated:

I have more experience...and now that I have a better self-perception of my ability, I feel like I've done it so many times that it's like old news. And so I don't mind communicating now. It doesn't bother me to pick up the phone to call home because I've done it so many times now.

Emersion into communicating concisely and meaningfully with parents can be practiced early and with various scenarios. Focus Group Participant C discussed being prepared for anything rather than using fear as an excuse not to communicate with parents because “you know that they might be angry, or they might be happy, or they might just be inquisitive. So you are already prepared for that and you learn as you go not to take it personally.” Participants discussed a lack of preparation in the area of parent involvement and communication methods which caused a strong aversion to communicating with parents. The aversion acted as a barrier to involving and communicating with more parents resulting in a negative experience of parent involvement for the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia.

Themes from the Pictorial Representations

The art therapist reviewed the ten pictorial representations drawn by the participants prior to the semi-structured individual interviews. The ten scanned versions of pictorial representations are included in Appendix K as well as embedded throughout the results to illustrate each participant's story. The descriptive content analysis listed in terms of Figures 1-10 is listed below.

(1) Dropping off child saying "I love you"/ teacher welcoming child. The therapist was unsure of who/what the person in the middle is representing or the person in the circle, possibly the child saying goodbye to her parent from the classroom window?

(2) Scared parents at bottom of a hill, school on top of the hill, thunderstorm with lightning over top of the school, teacher questioning why parents don't come to the school. This art included latent content: school appears hard to access, appears like a jail cell with bars, sketchy lines indicating anxiety on the parents' end.

(3) Words to describe teachers' experiences of parent involvement: hard, good, important, planned, development, unpredictable, intentional. The latent content included: meetings are meant to be planned/ intentional as some meetings are unpredictable? The interaction between parents and teachers is good and important, especially for the child's development.

(4) Fall- teacher and parent willing to work together- implying equal interest. By winter- teacher reaches out to parents via documents to sign and phone call but gets no response or parents' phone number is no longer working. By spring- parent is calling teacher yelling that their child is now failing and accusing teacher of not contacting parent; teacher states she did and refers to her documentation to state on what date. By summer- focus is on field day/athletics-

only two academic awards given out; eight involved in field day. There was a lack of color in all four quadrants; use of all space on the composition. Latent content implies a lack of trust or relationship built between teacher and parent when parent accuses teacher for not reaching out.

(5) Open house at school. No parents in attendance as evidenced by empty chairs; teacher appears confused; heavy emphasis on lines of the empty desks.

(6) Parent-teacher conference: teacher and parent smiling; parent may have called the meeting in regards to his/her son since he/she is asking teacher about his/her son; teacher appears confused; student is present.

(7) Teacher is asking parents to email or Bloom? + telephone + agenda. Latent content includes the teacher reaching out; no parents present or anything symbolizing such; lacking color, detail, people.

(8) Teacher is sitting at desk calling on phone. Responses include “I’m sorry the number you have reached is disconnected” and “Voice mailbox is full.” Clock on wall reads 5:00 either in the morning or evening. Time of day is not certain.

(9) Two people are standing separated. One looks concerned the other is speaking in Spanish. The word “procrastination” is above the two people. One speaking in Spanish could symbolize a Spanish-speaking parent who wants to talk to the teacher but they are avoiding the conversation.

(10) One male adult is asking students to line up for a field trip. Children are scattered in the foreground and background of the drawing. A school bus is drawn in the background. There are lines rising from the teacher’s head that may symbolize steam or stress.

The certified art therapist analyzed and coded themes for the pictorial representations composed by the participants. The art therapist held a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology

as well as a Master of Science degree in art therapy. The art therapist currently works as a clinical services supervisor and was approved through the IRB process to code the participants' pictorial representations. She also provided art therapy sessions and trainings at schools with students who have been affected by trauma and hence display problematic behaviors at school. The art therapist analyzed and coded the art into themes after examining the manifest and latent content and the chosen medium.

Table 4

Pictorial Representation Themes and Occurrences

Themes	Occurrences
Positive Experiences	3
Negative Experiences	7
Decreasing Parent Involvement	1
Emotion	10
Lack of Color	6

Positive Experiences

Of the ten pictorial representations, there were one to three positive experiences depicted with parent and teacher engagement at drop-off time and then at a parent-teacher conference, and possibly through the words describing “good and important” experiences. These themes were seen in Figures 1, 3, and 6.

Negative Experiences

Figures 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 depicted negative experiences with parent involvement showing no parent involvement or the perception of no parent involvement. One picture depicted the look of fear or worry as the teacher was procrastinating calling a Spanish-speaking parent.

Decreasing Parent Involvement

One drawing depicted decreasing parent involvement throughout the school year until the parent has a problem that needs addressing and then initiates the conversation despite the teacher reaching out first. This theme was depicted in Figure 4.

Emotion

The overall emotions involved in parent/teacher interactions included happiness, fear, confusion, and anger. One drawing depicted a mother seemingly happy while dropping her child off at school with the teacher welcoming the child into her classroom. Another happy picture was a parent with a smile on his or her face talking to the teacher about the student. One drawing depicted parents feeling scared to come to the schools. Two drawings depicting confusion showed a confused teacher standing in front of the room with no parents in the seats at Open House while another teacher was confused and upset asking his students to line up for a field trip. Two drawings depicted anger with a parent yelling at the teacher over the phone for not having contacted the parent when the student was failing and the second drawing of a teacher angered by the inability to contact a parent over the telephone.

Lack of Color

There was a lack of color or monochromatic colors used and a lack of details in at least six of the ten drawings. The participants were provided with various media including sharpened colored pencils and blue and black pens. The composition was the 8½ x 11 size paper with which the participants were provided. About half of the composition was used in two of the drawings. There was an omission of people (teachers and parents) in two of the drawings. These observations imply a lack of positive regard in reference to the interactions between parents and teachers.

Research Question One

Research Question One stated: How do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers describe their experiences with academic parental involvement? Various ideas, emotions, and descriptive terms arose throughout the pictorial representation coding, individual interviews, and the focus group interview. Terminology used by participants included: stressful, useful, helpful, frightening, interesting, effective, ineffective, discouraging, and learning experience.

The range of emotions varied among the participants in the semi-structured individual interviews and the focus group interview. All of the participants described at least one experience with parents as a learning experience. From the learning experience, the participants discussed how they were able to devise a mental list of best methods for involving parents they worked with each school year. That mental list grew each year as teachers experimented with new technology and new methods to involve parents. All participants agreed that their experiences were meaningful and much needed no matter the outcome of the communication.

When describing specific experiences, the participants' descriptions ranged from discouraging and frightening to useful and helpful. Specific events such as field trips and school performances elicited a positive description of parent involvement whereas technological communication over the phone or email elicited a more negative description of academic parent involvement.

Research Question Two

Research Question Two stated: What preservice and in-service training do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at denied accreditation elementary schools in Virginia experience to foster academic parental involvement at denied accreditation schools? While many of the participants experienced in-service training opportunities, all of the participants stated that they did not have preservice training on parent involvement and methods to foster that involvement.

Sarah described a college course she attended at a Virginia state college that discussed “challenges that families face...their academic backgrounds, and how to reach out to them.” But she noted that there was no other information on technology or methods available for involving or communicating with parents.

Scott could not recall a specific class that addressed parent involvement and attributed his success with parent involvement to “trial and error in the classroom rather than learning it before I became a teacher in any of my training at university.” Samantha also credited her parent involvement techniques to experience and trial and error since her college only discussed homework and field trips when it came to parent involvement. Danielle spent much of her time in the classroom observing and student teaching in college, and she stated that she “had a lot more interaction with parents than a lot of people, even my first year of teaching because I had done it a lot.”

Abby and Clara both received little instruction in college in regards to parent involvement methods. Abby stated that “there was really none...there really wasn’t teaching [about parent involvement] at all.” Clara recalled learning about assessing students and finding individual strengths in students but that she “always just assumed that report cards would transfer that information onto the parents. There really wasn’t any teaching us about how to...work with parents.”

Research Question Three

The third research question stated: In what ways do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers perceive their experiences with academic parental involvement influence their communication methods with parents at denied accreditation schools? During semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview, participants described utilizing many different methods including

technology and print to involve parents. These various methods were motivated by past experiences and how parent involvement was influenced by their communication methods.

Teachers with very little preparation or experience commented on a lack of initiative in using communication methods with parents. They favored notes and emails rather than face-to-face or telephone conversations. Any negative experiences deterred the participants from calling or speaking openly with a parent about his or her child's behavior.

It was also said to be a discouraging experience when parents who were asked to be involved in school events through letters, phone messages, and notes yielded low attendance. One participant discussed the amount of money she paid out of pocket to produce a small play for the school and the low attendance of parents discouraging the participant from attempting future activities or reaching out to parents for help.

The participants were also aware of using the student as a gatekeeper to transfer notes from teacher to parent or parent to teacher. As a primary method of many participants, placing notes and letters in agendas or folders influenced the participants' experience of parent involvement because they were unsure if notes were going home to parents. For many participants, this required an extra phone call home to ensure that the note or letter had arrived.

Summary

This chapter reported on the six major themes that emerged from the clustering of codes which were: parent involvement methods, communication, school climate, teacher preparation, teacher-observed effect on students, and barriers to involvement. Each of the themes and subthemes provided answers to a corresponding research question.

Parent involvement methods included effective methods, ineffective methods, teacher preferences, technology, and paper-based methods. Motivation to communicate, perceived

communication ability, and conferences were described as subthemes to communication. The school climate in conjunction with parent involvement was described as being either positive or negative depending on the relationship teachers had with parents. Preservice training and inservice training described teacher preparation experiences in the area of parent involvement and effective communication. The fifth theme explored the effect of parent involvement on the student which at times was discouraging if there was a lack of parent involvement. The fifth theme also explored the participants' perceived effects on the student when the student acts as the gatekeeper for communication methods between teacher and parent. Finally, gender, technology, and preparation were perceived as barriers to involvement. Each of the themes created a descriptive summary of the experiences of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers with academic parent involvement at public, denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences of academic parent involvement at public, denied-accreditation rated schools in Virginia. Years of research have explored parents' experiences of working with teachers but very little research has explored teachers' experiences of collaborating with parents at denied-accreditation schools in the state of Virginia. Understanding the teachers' experiences of academic parental involvement provides insight for educators, school administration, higher education officials, and parents alike who want to foster open communication between teachers and parents.

In the previous chapter, I provided a description of the participants' experiences, while in this chapter I summarize the findings, discuss and interpret the findings, and review the related literature and theoretical framework in light of the findings. The chapter concludes with implications for the field of education in higher education settings and professional development, as well as limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Data collected through pictorial representations, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview were used in conducting this transcendental phenomenological study. This research examined how third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers described their experience of academic parent involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools in Virginia. The research questions were addressed by six themes identified in the data as follows: parent involvement methods, communication, school climate, teacher preparation, teacher-observed effect on students, and barriers to involvement.

The first research question asked: How do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers describe their experiences with academic parental involvement? An analysis of the data showed various ways that school climate was affected by parent involvement experiences as well as the overall teacher-observed effect on students. Teachers described some experiences with parent involvement to be combative and discouraging while other teachers described their experiences with parent involvement to be beneficial. The combative and discouraging experiences arose when talking about delivering news over the phone or through email, whereas the beneficial experiences occurred when parents were interested in their child's academic performance and were present in the school for events and meetings. In addition, teachers found that school events employing the students as presenters and performers garnered the most parent involvement.

The second research question asked: What preservice and in-service training do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers experience to foster academic parental involvement at denied-accreditation schools? Participants described their teacher preparation and communication as determiners of their comfortability when communicating with parents to improve parent involvement as meaningful, two-way communication. All participants responded that there were no explicit classes on parent involvement or communicating with parents. Instead, the participants cited experience as their way of improving parent involvement. Many participants suggested communication courses during preservice or in-service to help provide learning opportunities for new teachers. Further discussion on preservice and in-service training that third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in the study underwent is located in implications.

The third research question asked: In what ways do third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers perceive their experiences with academic parental involvement influence their communication

methods with parents at denied-accreditation schools? Barriers to involvement were described by participants such as technology and a lack of shared resources of teachers and parents such as email, computers, and telephones. According to the participants, technology could be a deterrent for parent involvement when parents do not have access to the technology the school utilizes for parent contact. Teachers also described a lack of resources for families such as phones, computers, and transportation when teachers requested phone or in-person conferences.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement referring to two-way communication between parents and teachers in Virginia, public elementary schools scoring below 70% on state assessments for four or more consecutive years. In this section, I discuss the study findings in relationship to the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Theoretical Literature

First, the transcendental phenomenological research requires bracketing to assure that the experiences of the participants are described and understood but not interpreted. As a current teacher, it was very hard to bracket my own experiences and not create inferences when conveying my findings. I found it difficult even after bracketing and revisiting my preconceived ideas to ignore the background knowledge I brought to the study. This study required multiple visitations to my findings to ensure that I was describing the experiences of the participants and not interpreting them using my own biases. Moustakas (1994) urged that the stability of a transcendental phenomenological research study lies in the researcher's ability to remove himself or herself from the environment of the study (Creswell, 2013; Glendinning, 2008).

The participants were extremely open in sharing information and their experiences with parent involvement at their schools. After reviewing the audio files during transcription, it was clear that they were providing insight that was truthful and emotional for them. Furthermore, there was a relaxation that each one of the participants brought to the session after watching the visual recordings of the interviews. The participants shared their experiences where some described years of experience in parent involvement and others described their experiences but focused on the current year or the last year they recalled clearly. The experiences of the participants provided a story that I believe to be thought provoking and useful to school administration, other teachers, collegiate level education instructors, and parents of school students.

There was no significant ambiguity in the data. Although the locations of the schools varied, as well as the SES of the communities, the essence of the experience of parent involvement was very similar among participants. The use of Husserl's (1970) later formulation of transcendental phenomenology and the extraction of the essence of the experience was consistent among the participants. The coding of the data into themes helped build an outline to understand the essence of the experience of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers had with parent involvement at their denied-accreditation elementary schools. The findings created the foundation necessary in order to interpret the data and find meaning in their experiences.

Empirical Literature

The meanings that were found provided insight into the themes and the connections made between them. My study confirms various areas of previous research in both denied-accreditation schools and effects of parent involvement (Brown, Boser, Sargrad, & Marchitello, 2016; Kanfush, 2014; Polesel et al., 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2014). Based on previous research, I

expected to find that teachers at denied-accreditation elementary schools would discuss a lack of parent involvement in their schools. I also expected that those parents, who learned from the parent involvement communication with the classroom teacher, could turn around the academic standing of their child so that future academic problems could be offset (Monti et al., 2014). A teacher's experience communicating with parents was also described in the study, and previous research supports the importance of communication experience and comfort. Ramirez et al. (2016) found that preservice teachers need to be comfortable when interacting with parents, including parents from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Teachers also discussed experiencing discomfort talking to parents due to a lack of experience or preparation omitted from preservice education or in-service professional development. Most teachers in my study agreed that they were much more comfortable after many years of experience working and communicating with parents than they were when they began teaching. One study participant discussed working with ELs and how she was still not comfortable trusting translation technology. Olivos and Mendoza (2010) confirmed her feelings in my study when they explained that feeling comfortable conversing with parents from diverse cultures could be one of the strongest predictors of schools' success for ELs. Kerry discussed her experience working with a large EL population. Kerry stated that she tried her "hardest to avoid calling a family that does not speak English in the home." She also stated that professional development focusing on communicating with families of second language learners would benefit teachers because of the amount of ELs in the school. Figure 8 depicts Kerry's pictorial representation of her memories when working with the family of an EL student.



Figure 8. Kerry's pictorial representation

A divergence from previous research occurred in my study. I did not expect to find how discouraged teachers became when there were consistent instances of a lack of parent involvement. Teachers who supplemented classroom and school activities with their own money and time outside of school hours expressed more disappointment than teachers who experienced lack of involvement during school hours with behaviors such as unanswered phone calls or absence from school-hour conferences. I was amazed at the various ways teachers attempted to involve parents through technology and paper-based methods while still feeling discouraged by the lack of parent involvement. The teachers' resiliency and lack of resentment towards future parent involvement was also surprising. I expected that teachers who experienced negative parent involvement would have a dejected outlook on future experiences. That was not the case. Many of the descriptions were very similar and would be considered good teaching methods; however, analysis provided awareness to the experience of parent involvement as it related to the research questions. Research also found that some failing schools are not welcoming to parents and the community (Jefferson, 2015; Reyes & Garcia, 2014). All of the teachers in the study commented on the school and the teacher's methods to get parents into the building. Some

schools held parent workshops, offered adjusted hours for conferences, and purchased various programs that teachers and parents could use to communicate. Previous research would have led me to expect schools and teachers who tried very little to involve parents, which was not the case with the schools involved in the study. The denied-accreditation elementary schools created plans, committees, and activities to create a school climate conducive to meaningful communication and face-to-face involvement.

This study extends the theoretical foundation by looking at the ways in which teachers describe parent involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools. It also shines a light on third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in high-stress grade levels. Research has shown that parent involvement can affect a student's academic ability, but research has also shown that lack of parent involvement can discourage teachers from continuing parent involvement. That combination can be hazardous for those students and schools needing to prove academic integrity. This research extends the studies to show that teachers in high-stress grade levels continue to communicate and attempt to communicate with parents beyond what is necessary in order to gain parent support and understanding. Although many of the participants in the study described their experiences as discouraging, they continued their efforts to increase parent involvement.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical basis for this study was founded in the Getzels-Guba (1957) socio-psychology theory and Bakhtin's (1986) communication theory of dialogism. Socio-psychology theory of social behavior lends itself to a social system as a school due to its institutional foundation, its staff and faculty roles and expectations as individuals, and each staff members'

personality and need-disposition (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Communication theory of dialogism finds that there are various levels of participation in construction of meaning, and in the education field, there are also many levels of meaning beyond what the teacher, parent, or administration normally would observe (Bakhtin, 1986). Interpretation of what is communicated and not communicated proves that other interpretations exist which can alter the message from sender to receiver (Bakhtin, 1986; Jabri et al., 2008). Based on the Getzels-Guba (1957) socio-psychology theory of social behavior, parent-teacher communication is dependent on the issues and aims of the interaction. Bakhtin's (1986) theory of dialogism compliments the Getzels-Guba theoretical basis where previous experiences and memories influence the messages sent between sender and receiver (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). In this study, the sender and receiver are parent and teacher or teacher and parent depending on the cause for communication. Both of these theories highlight the communicative needs of the sender and receiver in an institutional environment. Meaningful, two-way communication was a necessary tool in involving parents in the academics and events of the elementary state testing grades at denied-accreditation schools in Virginia.

The Getzels-Guba (1957) socio-psychology theory of social behavior explained that it is necessary to identify required expectations and prohibited behaviors of both the institution and individuals' goals and needs to be highly productive (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015). These required expectations and prohibited behaviors also seek to ensure job satisfaction and morale (Woesman & Wasonga, 2015). In relation to the socio-psychology theory, teachers at denied-accreditation elementary schools have behavioral expectations of parents and students as well as staff and administration. In order for high productivity, job satisfaction, and morale to thrive, teachers should have positive expectations of the behavior from parents when needed.

Unfortunately, all of the teachers experienced some degree of discouragement when communicating with parents of students.

Furthermore, Getzels and Guba (1957) posited that an individual's attempt to cope with his or her environment is composed of patterns of expectations for the behavior consistent with his or her own pattern of needs. All participants expected various communications with parents in times of behavior problems, positive reinforcement, and assistance within the classroom or school. When the expectations of behavior consistent with the participants' needs were not in alignment with the teachers, social-psychology theory of social behavior would posit that social behavior would suffer as an attempt to cope with the environment that is lacking parent involvement. Many of the participants discussed having to find ways to integrate the demands of various forms of communication to the demands of what the participant had access to and was willing to employ to increase academic parent involvement.

Bakhtin's (1986) dialogism was dependent on participants such as parent and teacher taking on a meaningful role that may or may not raise the morale of teachers (Bakhtin, 1986). If both roles are constructed in meaning such as expectations of parent and teacher, then the interaction and truth would emerge from interaction via the carriers of the shared event (Sidorkin, 2002). Bakhtin posited that truth was derived from a number of statements rather than single disconnected statements (Sidorkin, 2002). Constant communication between teacher and parent is required to have truly-meaningful communication and parent involvement. If teachers send letters home to parents or make phone calls and emails without response from the parent, there is a lack of communication which can diminish the moral of the teacher. This can also be said of parents who send notes, letters, emails, and make phone calls without a timely response from the teacher. Without constant communication stemming from internal persuasive

discourse, there is no tension or social interaction to help both parties arrive at an understanding (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

In this study, the participants discussed a lack of constant communication between teacher and parent that resulted in tension and conflict and ultimately no understanding or solution between the two parties. Also, Bakhtin (1986) found that change communication occurs over time while interaction endures and reality is shaped and re-shaped through communication. Participants in the study who lacked parent involvement in their teaching experience found that there was no evolution or continuous discovery of meaning since there was no enduring conversation with parents. Scott found that it took a full year of enduring interaction with parents of one student to finally shape and re-shape how the parents felt about the participant as a teacher, the school, and the teacher's teaching style. Scott discussed his experience with the difficult parent who came to trust and understand him but only after a continuous discovery of meaning through prolonged interaction (Bakhtin, 1986; Jabri et al., 2008).

Bakhtin (1986) also posited that insight is denied until it is communicated to another. In the case of this study, insights of teachers are denied until they are communicated to the parent where there is communication, interpretation, and response (Bakhtin, 1986). From that moment, a teacher initiates communication with a receiver such as the parent, the teacher and parent have a possibility for illumination and insight into their feelings, opinions, and beliefs.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of this study corroborate a number of studies on parent involvement, teacher morale, and academically unsuccessful schools (Blair, 2014; Christianakis,

2011; Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2015; Evans & Radina, 2014; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Lavery, 2015; Walsh et al., 2014).

Parent involvement programs and technology range from printable student newsletters to DVD newsletters and websites (DeBaryshe et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2014). Training is required to utilize such programs and technology for both parents and teachers (Ho et al., 2012). In homes where internet is available, parents can stay in contact with teachers and student academics (Davidovitch & Yavich, 2015). The participants in the study also found technology and parent involvement programs to be beneficial to academic success as long as the programs and technology included training. The participants listed their methods but also reflected on the need for the same technology and internet in the home. Participants described homes without computers or smart phones that could not communicate via the newest forms of technology.

Previous research also explored the benefits of parental involvement in academics. Researchers Cheung and Pomerantz (2015) found that students who perceive that their parents value education and the child's education, place more value on their own school achievement over time. Much of the current research follows parent involvement in young children over time; however, this study and the participants were able to describe immediate differences between students who had active parent involvement and those that did not (Avvisati et al., 2014; Monti et al., 2014; Neymotin, 2014). The participants in this study found that children responded quickly when they had a parent who was monitoring their growth academically and behaviorally. Chrystal described that students who had on-going parental involvement and actively communicated with the teacher "came into the classroom as a high achiever and did not display negative behavior." She also described the students who knew their parent would not answer or respond to phone calls as sometimes telling her "that they can do whatever they want because

their parent doesn't care." Chrystal stated that from her experience "those students without ongoing support are usually low-performing in all subject areas and display harmful behaviors to themselves or other students in the class."

The barriers that many teachers face when attempting meaningful communication include cultural differences and socioeconomic status (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). Participants in this study found gender and technology to be the two most experienced barriers to parent involvement. Participants in the study echoed the previous research when they described their difficulty of involving parents in school-based, academic activities; however, many of the participants found a lack of or fear of technology to cut parents off from teachers. Scott also described combative parents as the "mother bears who want to protect their child from the horrors they may have faced when they were in school."

The final empirical implication highlighting previous research to the findings of the current study is parent involvement at failing schools. Research found that parents' beliefs regarding a school as a whole are tainted, when in reality, only a segment of the population may be struggling (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014). The current study explores the teachers' experiences with parent involvement at schools that have been labeled as "failing." During his individual interview and pictorial representation in Figure 9, Patrick discussed the lack of parent involvement during field trips and how parents "have set expectations for the school" but that "only areas of the school are failing, not the entirety of the school." The same sentiment was echoed by Chrystal who saw her school move from full accreditation to denied accreditation status. Chrystal saw a "decline in parent involvement and parent effort when the school's rating was published in the local newspaper." She also stated that "it was like the parents just gave up trying."

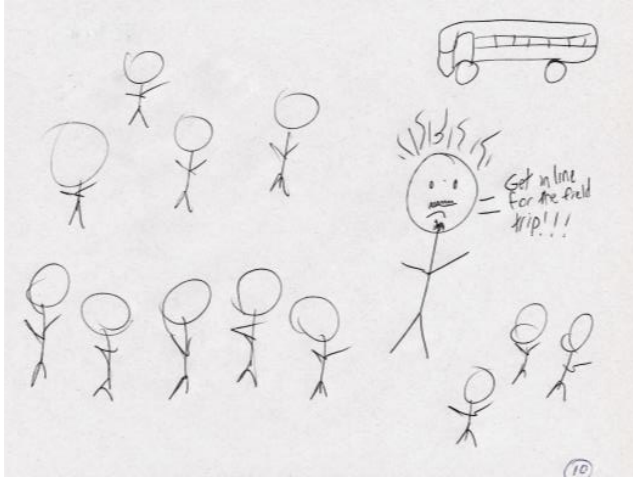


Figure 9. Patrick's pictorial representation

Practical Implications

There was very little divergence of participants' experiences and how they described their experience of parent involvement at elementary schools in all different locations in Virginia. The findings from this study confirm much of the previous studies conducted in the field of parent involvement focusing on the experiences of the teacher (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Choi et al., 2015; Christiankis, 2011; Dor, 2012; Dumont et al., 2014; Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015; Olmstead, 2013; Vandergrift & Greene, 1992). For example, the participants described an overall lack of parent involvement in their schools. They all also noted that parents eagerly were involved in school performances and non-academic events such as field day but were resistant to attend parent-teacher conferences or open house activities. Clara's pictorial representation in Figure 10 depicts an empty classroom during open house. The drawing of the character standing in the front of the class is emotes sadness and frustration.



Figure 10. Clara's pictorial representation

Each participant stated that the lack of involvement or inability to communicate with parents caused discouragement and lessened their motivation to continue trying to involve parents. Finally, the participants discussed the need to differentiate the various technology and methods used to involve parents. Studies have shown that teachers understand the importance of parent involvement can improve academic outcomes; however, in crowded classrooms, the study also discussed the difficulty of reaching out to parents using various methods and technology (Dor, 2012). Abby utilized various forms of technology as back-up methods to ensuring parents received a first notice.

The study also supported previous findings from Watson and Bogotch (2015) in which parent involvement should begin with the teachers and administrators initiating communication with parents. The participants all discussed how they attempted to reach out to all parents at the beginning of the school year with a positive comment prior to having to call for any other reason. Watson and Bogotch (2015) also used various types of community cultural wealth assets such as aspirational and social capital that can be perceived in a positive way to build school programs to help parents in low SES communities. Many of the participants discussed exploring methods to involve parents such as workshops, SOL parent night, and technology assistance. Those

methods that teachers and schools used in the study transfer to Watson and Bogotch's (2015) study to reframe the concept of parent involvement in aspirational capital and social capital.

The findings of this study are useful for administrators and higher education officials in educating teachers and preservice teachers about specific communication methods to employ when involving parents face-to-face or through technology. Professional development for teachers and courses for preservice teachers could be provided based on the previous and current research for schools that are considered denied-accreditation elementary schools or are located in low SES areas.

Also, understanding the various barriers to parent involvement can help teachers empathize with the possible struggles that families face. As the barriers for meaningful two-way communication abound for some families, the findings of this study are useful for teachers who feel as if they have run out of ways to communicate with parents. Various methods for technology as well as phone communication for EL students are described in the participants' experiences and findings that schools can use in addition to their current methods of involving parents.

Recommendations for School Administration

During the coding of pictorial representations, transcription of semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interviews, I found that similar themes began to develop and repeat. School administration should provide professional development on best communication practices especially with non-native English speakers. Another recommendation for school administration is to support and encourage teachers to routinely communicate with parents throughout the school year. This is based on the common theme that meaningful two-way communication experience increased the participants' positive self-perception ability of parent involvement. A

final recommendation based on the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications would be for school administration to rethink their methods for involving parents in the school. Many of the participants experienced a lack of parent involvement due to what they perceived as fear from parents' own negative experiences at school. Repurposing academic workshops for parents to include student performances would lessen the anxiety attached to school, academics, and failure.

Recommendations for Preservice Teacher Preparation

One recommendation suggested for college level classes based on the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications from this study would be an increased focus on parent involvement. Various areas of parental involvement could be explored through a course of various courses on methods for parent involvement, communication theory, and how to organize parent involvement in a classroom or at a school. Technology courses for education could also include instruction on the various apps and technology currently available for teachers and parents to foster meaningful two-way communication.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are boundaries set forth by the researcher. The first delimitation of the study is the phenomenological research method. A phenomenological study was chosen due to its inquiry into a phenomenon such as academic parent involvement. The research method also aided in understanding the participants' experiences of the phenomenon. I limited the boundaries of this study to data collection and analysis of the transcendental phenomenological research design. This study also excluded schools that have failed to meet AYP for less than four years. Ratings for these schools were deemed "partially accredited" for various reasons such as: approaching benchmarks, improving schools, warned schools, and reconstituted schools

(VDOE, 2016). The partially-accredited public schools in the state of Virginia are one year away from being in the same predicament as the current schools chosen for the study. Within the selected schools, this study was delimited to third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers with at least two years of full-time, full-licensure teaching experience in the general public education classroom and at least one year of experience working at a denied-accreditation school in the state of Virginia. Interviewed teachers must have had at least one year completed in the school while under the denied-accreditation rating in the case of a reconstituted school where staffing changes were made. There was no delimitation for maximum number of years of experience as teachers with two or more years were all able to express their lived experience of the phenomenon. I chose to interview my participants based on the high-stress role as testing preparatory Grades 3, 4, and 5 with at least a year of experience involving parents. The three testing grades determine an elementary school accreditation rating, and those teachers experience the most pressure from administration and parents (Sukhbaatar, 2014). Ample research has been conducted on the experiences of parents at failing and succeeding schools (Schueler, Capotosto, Bahena, McIntyre, & Gehlback, 2014) as well as overall parent experiences with teachers in schools (Tzuo, Tan, Yong, & Liang, 2015). However, research conducted on the experiences of teachers with parent involvement is lacking, especially at denied-accreditation schools (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991).

Limitations are weaknesses that cannot be controlled by the researcher. Limitations of this study include a lack of control as to the type of school setting including urban, suburban, and rural. I could not control the schools that accepted or rejected my letter to participate in the study. This also includes the city or county where the school is located in the state of Virginia. Denied-accreditation schools may or may not include Title I funded schools. Another limitation

of the study includes the teachers who agreed to participate in the study and who understood the topic of the study prior to agreeing to participate. The final limitations of the study pertain to the specific teachers in the denied-accreditation elementary schools. The level of education attained by the teacher as well as the four-year accredited college or university he or she attended cannot be controlled. Also, the gender and ethnicity of the teacher is a limitation of the study. The possible amount of female-to-male teacher experiences in the study may alter the themes and essence of the central phenomenon since 76% of public school teachers are female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations and delimitations and reflection of them, there are various ways in which the research could be extended for future teachers, administrators, teacher preparatory programs and parents. Future studies might include repeating the study while including third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers who are not employed at denied-accreditation elementary schools. The diverse group of SOL-test grade teachers' experiences at denied-accreditation elementary schools could be compared and contrasted to those SOL-test grade teachers' experiences at fully-accredited elementary schools. A quantitative future study on a similar topic could be produced in order to determine the difficulty of contacting parents when there is poor student behavior versus contacting parents in regards to student recognition and praise.

In addition, one participant taught a large population of ELs and used a translation service for parent involvement. A future study that evolves from the ideas set forth in this study could examine the experiences of SOL-test grade teachers who teach a high amount of ELs and their experiences of parent involvement when English is not the primary language spoken in the home.

Finally, future research could explore a more diverse range of participants in the areas of age, gender, race, and ethnic diversity. In the current study, there was one male participant and all participants were white. A closer examination of more diverse participants in the area of parent involvement experiences could identify other obstacles and barriers to parent involvement.

Summary

In summary, the findings of this research revealed varied experiences for third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers dealing with parent involvement at denied-accreditation elementary schools; however, the experiences played a significant role in how teachers chose whether to communicate with parents. The methods utilized to communicate with parents relied heavily on what methods were accessible to parents; therefore, teachers needed to differentiate their methods with different students' parents. At a denied-accreditation elementary school, school climate is crucial to creating a safe and positive learning environment, but at times parent involvement can affect school climate and students. The parent involvement methods discussed during the study brought light to various methods including those that were successful, unsuccessful, preferred, and technologically advanced.

Teacher preparation and experience was also addressed by each of the participants and previous research and literature. One of the important lessons was that teachers need constant exposure to parent involvement from teacher preparatory classes onward as well as professional development in parent involvement as technology evolves and changes. Getzels and Guba (1957) and Bakhtin (1986) espoused in their communication theories the need for constant parent involvement to strengthen teachers' commitment and motivation to the school, in turn increasing organizational effectiveness.

Along with teacher preparation and experience, the teacher-observed effect on students showed to be beneficial when parent involvement was consistent between teacher and parent. Teachers who experienced a lack of parent involvement experienced children who were sad and disappointed when their parents did not participate or were not as active in the classroom community as other parents. Many participants discussed the importance of the “bubble student” who has the ability to pass the Virginia SOLs if they receive an average amount of support from home and in the classroom. The teachers in the study stated that parent involvement was the most important for the “bubble students” who had the potential to excel.

Overall, parent involvement was found to be inconsistent in many of the schools and the methods of communicating with parents inconsistent as well. Overall, the teachers stated that experience was the best teaching they received for involving parents in the classroom community and communicating with them in meaningful two-way communication. Finally, this research sheds light on the importance of parent involvement and the ways teachers push past barriers and discouraging experiences to remain resilient by exploring new avenues to foster a strong school and home connection.

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APPENDIX A: Reflective Journal Excerpt

Journaling my experiences prior to the semi-structured interviews and after data analysis is a concept that I feel is vital to exploring the true lived phenomenon of academic parental involvement experienced by third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at public, denied accreditation schools in the state of Virginia. Through the use of journaling, I can bracket my perspectives and examine them which may lead to a shift in stance (Fischer, 2009). I must be “respectful of and true to the individual, and my description should evoke a lived as well as a conceptual sense of the persons” when I write my entries (Fischer, 2009, p. 587).

Pre and Post IRB and School approval

1/18/17-2/15/17

I knew setting out with my interest in denied accredited schools that it would be hard to get schools to agree to the study because their rating is seen as a blemish on the school. No school wants to emphasize something like that. Most schools outright refused to participate and others had me complete all of their school-policy research documents only to decline it afterwards. It has been disheartening but I am hoping that I can bracket even these negative feelings towards the overall study. I also need to make sure that I do not start to view the denied accreditation rating as negatively as many of the schools do. As a teacher who worked in an “accredited with warning” school I always viewed it as a way to improve and work harder towards a goal rather than just a label.

Now that I have IRB approval I did not realize how unkind some school districts and administrators could be to researchers. I encountered this while searching for teachers to complete even just the Lawshe test for content validity. I needed to find experts in the field but even reaching out to fully-accredited schools was difficult; they saw the title of the research and declined to participate in the survey. The pilot test was similar where administrators were extremely protective of their teachers and overall school community.

2/15/17

I received my first participant response from an approved school district! This school has been so helpful and interested in the study. They were the first district to say yes and each teacher has been very positive which is so different from what I expected and faced with a denied accreditation school. I need to keep in mind that not all schools are closed-door and some are willing to open up about their weaknesses as well as accomplishments.

Interviews

Semi-structured, individualized interviews were conducted after the school day which was requested by each school district. District officials did not want teachers using their school day to complete interviews or the focus group. I met teachers at their chosen location where they could speak freely.

Example of Interview Journaling

3/17/17

I arrived at the school to complete my interview after driving through the mountains. I felt like I was back in Pennsylvania. The rural area was beautiful and the town where the school

was located contained a Walmart, grocery stores and small strip malls. It was an overcast day in the mountains and very quiet in the neighborhood area where the school was located off of the main street of the town. It appeared to be a low SES area with many abandoned houses falling into ruin. However, there were small brick ranch homes in a neighborhood by the school that I drove around prior to our meeting time. I also drove near an apartment complex which I later found out from my participant to be low income housing. She discussed this housing when she talked about where most of her students lived.

My participant met me at the door of her school which is where she had chosen to complete her interview. It was after school hours; school had been out for about 30 minutes. When I arrived it was eerily empty. It was the Friday of their spring break and they had just completed field day. The teacher led me outside to the courtyard where there was a ramp leading to two modular trailers separated by a small playground. Her fourth grade math class was located in one of the trailers. She had to unlock the door to the outside. She stated that the door was always kept locked. I felt as if that would be interesting every day, especially with the classroom located so closely to the playground.

Her classroom was fairly large but the amount of papers on the walls gave it a much smaller, enclosed feeling. The large composition paper had graphs and diagrams along with smaller labels organizing math terms. She stated that their math program/curriculum instructs the teachers use the walls as graphic organizers that she builds on throughout the year.

Overall, there was a welcoming atmosphere. She did have a southern accent and based on the area which is close to where she grew up I did have some preconceived ideas about her schooling. I was disappointed in myself when she stated what state college she attended which is fairly prestigious in the state of Virginia. I realized I was already making judgements just on the location and the school label. I need to keep in mind how my judgements are influencing my data collection and analysis especially for the upcoming focus group statements.

APPENDIX B: School Board Office E-mail Letter

Dear Administrator:

As a graduate student and doctoral candidate in the Department of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree to better understand parent involvement from a teacher's perspective at a denied accreditation elementary school. The title of my research project is: Third and fourth grade teachers' experiences of academic parental involvement at denied accreditation elementary schools: A phenomenological study. The purpose of my research is to understand third and fourth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at elementary schools scoring below 70% on state assessments for four or more consecutive years in Virginia

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at _____ Elementary school and contact members of your faculty to invite them to participate in my research study. Participants will remain anonymous as well as the location of the school. We will also use member checking to approve all transcriptions and analysis.

The data collected will be used to understand how teacher's experiences of parent involvement can affect their teaching practices in order to support preservice teachers and professional development for in-service teachers. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, confidential and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

For this education research, school/district permission will need to be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s) necessary for the school district. Thank you for considering my request. **If you are willing to ask your teachers to participate, please respond to this email and I will add you to the recipient list.**

Allison Knappenberger, Ed.S.
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

APPENDIX C: Participating School Confirmation E-mails**SCHOOL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

January 19, 2017

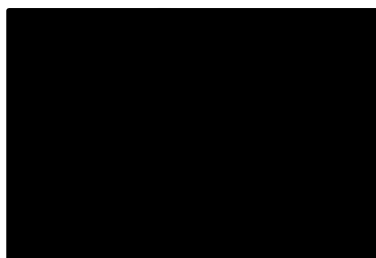
Dear Allison Knappenberger:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I, [REDACTED], give permission to conduct the voluntary research at [REDACTED] Elementary in [REDACTED], Virginia titled: Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at denied accreditation elementary schools in Virginia: A phenomenological study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Principal



SCHOOL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

January 19, 2017

Dear Allison Knappenberger:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I, representing [REDACTED] Schools, give permission to conduct the voluntary research titled: Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at denied accreditation elementary schools in Virginia: A phenomenological study at [REDACTED] *Elementary School*.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
[REDACTED]

Executive Director of Instruction

[REDACTED]

Office of Instructional Accountability

[REDACTED]

February 9, 2017

Ms. Allison Knappenberger

[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Knappenberger:

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Research Authorization Committee (RAC) has approved your research entitled *Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers' experiences with academic parental involvement at denied accreditation elementary schools in Virginia: A phenomenological study*. Please include a copy of this letter in any communication with the elementary principals in [REDACTED] regarding your study. Your research interests must remain confined to the provisions outlined in your approved research request application. Authorizations for additional research or changes in your current procedures must first be submitted to the RAC for review.

The RAC mandates that all research applicants use pseudonyms in place of the names of students, staff, schools, and/or the school division in any documentation produced from your study. The use of pseudonyms in your study must include any mention of [REDACTED] as this would inadvertently identify the school division. This precaution is taken to ensure the safety and anonymity of all persons participating in the study, safeguard the division from analyses produced from inaccurate and/or faulty methodologies, and add to the rigor and integrity of all reported results.

I also wish to confirm that you will not conduct the interviews for your research during the school day.

Please keep in mind that you are not permitted to begin data collection until you have been granted full approval by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Once full IRB approval has been granted, you will need to submit this document to the [REDACTED]

I wish you much success on your work, and look forward to reading the results of your final study. The RAC requests that a written final summary of all research be submitted to the chairperson upon completion. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Research Authorization Committee Chair

APPENDIX D: Teacher Recruitment E-mail Letter

Dear teacher:

As a graduate student in the Department of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand third and fourth grade teachers' experiences' of parent involvement at a denied accreditation school. The purpose of my research is to answer three research questions which include: How do third and fourth grade teachers at denied accreditation schools describe their experiences with academic parental involvement? What preservice and in-service training do third and fourth grade teachers experience to foster academic parental involvement at denied accreditation schools? In what ways do third and fourth grade teachers perceive their experiences with academic parental involvement influence their communication methods with parents at denied accreditation schools? I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a fully licensed teacher in the state of Virginia, have taught for at least two years, and have taught in a denied accreditation school for at least one year you will be asked to participate in a pictorial representation (drawing), an individual interview, and a focus group of other third and fourth grade teachers at the denied accreditation school. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete a pictorial representation, 30 minutes to complete the individual interview and 30 minutes to complete the focus group. If the interview requires a second session, it will not be longer than 20 minutes and should not exceed a second session unless follow-up is needed during data analysis. Your participation will be completely confidential, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

To participate, please respond to this email with your name, email address, and phone number and complete and return the attached consent document to the researcher at the time of

the interview. Once I receive your email I will contact you to schedule an interview. Focus groups will be scheduled no longer than a month after the individual interviews take place. My contact information is listed below.

If you choose to participate, you will be treated to lunch, dinner or coffee after the individual interview as well as entered into a raffle for a \$50 Visa gift card.

A consent document is attached to this letter. **The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.**

Allison Knappenberger, Ed.S.
aknappenberger@liberty.edu
610-428-0266
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

APPENDIX E: Teacher Informed Consent Letter

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from February 9, 2017 to February 9, 2018 Protocol #2715.020917

THIRD AND FOURTH GRADE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT DENIED ACCREDITATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY.

Allison Knappenberger Liberty University School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of third and fourth grad teachers' experiences of parent involvement at a denied accreditation school. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an experienced third or fourth grade teacher currently employed at a denied accreditation school. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Allison Knappenberger, a doctoral candidate in the school of education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand third and fourth grade teachers' experiences of academic parent involvement at denied accreditation rated schools. I am hoping to find how teachers describe their experiences, what pre-service and in-service training teachers undergo to work with parents, and how their experiences with parents influence their teaching and communication methods.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- 1.) Given a maximum of 10 minutes, draw a confidential pictorial representation of your experiences with parent involvement. The drawing will be used for the study but will remain confidential through the use of a pseudonym.

- 2.) Participate in a confidential 10 question interview about your experiences with parent involvement and training with no session to last longer than 30 minutes. The interview will be audio and visual recorded for transcription purposes. You may be contacted after individual interviews for a follow-up interview if necessary
- 3.) Participate in a focus group of other third and fourth grade teachers to describe experiences of parent involvement not to last more than one 30 minute session. The focus group will be audio and visual recorded for transcription purposes.
- 4.) Participants will be asked to member check the transcription and data analysis for accuracy of the lived experiences.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal and are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are not direct; however, there may be a benefit to society for preparing pre-service and in-service teachers with training to work collaboratively with parents and encourage academic parent involvement in the school thus raising the academic bar for schools.

Compensation: A coffee, lunch, or dinner will be provided dependent on the time of the individual interview. Also, participants will be entered in a raffle to win a \$50 Visa gift card for taking part in this study. Disbursement of the coffee, lunch, or dinner will occur immediately after the interview and the raffle winner will receive his or her gift card no more than a month after all interviews and focus groups are completed. If a participant withdraws from the study, he or she will not be considered for the raffle.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject or

school. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you before I share it.

All data will be kept in locking file cabinets, USB drives will be kept in a portable locking container and recording devices will also be kept in a locking file cabinet when not used for research analysis or data collection. After the mandatory three years, all paper data will be shredded and recycled, audio cassettes used for back up recording will be physically destroyed and computer files will be deleted using a software program that cleans hard drives and deletes information. Pictorial representations will be saved in the locking file cabinet for any educational purposes for no more than 10 years. An art therapist will have access to the confidential pictorial representations if necessary for analysis as well as a transcriptionist may have access to the confidential audio recordings. An editor will be used for final editing of the textual description.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Allison Knappenberger. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at aknappenberger@liberty.edu or 610-428-0266. You may also contact the researcher's committee chair, Dr. Johnnie Seago at jkseago@gmail.com.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me/video-record me/use my pictorial representation as part of my participation in this study.

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F: Lawshe Test Results for Content Validity

Q1. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (9 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (9 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = -12.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = -.58$ Negative

Q5. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (36 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (36 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = 14.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = .67$ Positive

Q2. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (4 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (4 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = -17.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = -.81$ Negative

Q6. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (38 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (38 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = 16.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = .76$ Positive

Q3. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (22 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (22 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = .5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = .02$ Positive

Q7. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (33 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (33 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = 11.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = .53$ Positive

Q4. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (23 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (23 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = 1.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = .06$ Positive

Q8. $CVR = (\bar{n}_e - N/2) / (N/2)$
 $CVR = (16 - 43/2) / (43/2)$
 $CVR = (16 - 21.5) / (21.5)$
 $CVR = -5.5 / 21.5$
 $CVR = -.25$ Negative

Overall mean CVR = .05 (Positive)

APPENDIX G: Sample Interview Transcription

Abby Smith 4.18.17 - ATLAS.ti

Project Edit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Analysis Tools Views Windows Help

P-Docs P 1: Abby Smith 4.1 Quotes Codes Barriers to PI (1-0) Memos

P 1: Abby Smith 4.18.17

05 I: And where do you teach?

06 P: I teach in [REDACTED]

07 I: Ok, and what grade do you teach?

08 P: I teach third grade.

09 I: And how many years have you been teaching?

10 P: I have taught six years at [REDACTED]

11 I: Ok, um, why did you become a teacher?

12 P: Um, well I've always like working with children and watching them grow and learn more things.

13 I: Ok, and what are some of your favorite memories at your current place of employment? Or what is one of your favorite memories?

14 P: One of my favorite memories is helping the children during um, their their diarama project and helping them during when we were learning habitats.

15 I: Was there a lot of parent invovlement during this activity? Were the parents involved do you think?

16 P: Yes, I think they were because at a time the diaramma went home to be worked on also and many times they came back and there was definitely improvement in the diaramma

17 I: Ok, good, so tell me about your preservice education in college for working with parents.

18 P: I'm afraid there was really none.

19 I: Ok, was it just discussed or there was actually no teaching?

20 P: Um, there really wasn't teaching at all.

21 I: Ok, how do you perceive your parent involvement abilities

22 P: I think my abilities, I try my best. Um, with um sending um messages home and emails and fliers and things like that. Sending them home with the student and if need be following up with a phone call.

23 I: Ok, please tell me about the parent involvement in this school just a broad idea of it and some of your personal experiences and we'll get more specific as we go.

24 P: Well, the parent invovlement in the school um I'm afraid to say for academics is not quite as good as um coming to for example basketball games, football games, things like that. But there are parents that are do come in or call that want to be involved and ask question about their child

25 I: Ok, um and what methods and programs have you tried to involve parents in your classroom? Um technology based or paper type

26 P: That's really about what I've used. I've used emails, and um sending letters home, fliers, thats things like that and if need be like I said following up with a phone call if needed.

27 I: Do you feel like when you send papers home with the students they come back signed? and that the parents have actually reviewed them?

28 P: Sometimes, and those are the ones I follow up with a phone call if they're not signed.

29 I: Ok, um, so the next question, how do you feel that your communication with parents positively or negatively affects the students academic ability?

30 P: I think, that the parents who are become more invovled and um reach out and either contact me or their positivity shows. I can see many times the ability of the child increase um because of that

31 I: Um, what do you look for in effective parent involvement? What would be the perfect parent to work with?

32 P: Well, the perfect parent to work with would be one that um possibly calls at the beginning of the year, states that they want to be notified if there's any problems or changes and also ones that I see the parents, um the child's homework coming in that the homework is done that papers are singed that need to be, that would be it.

33 I: Um what else would you like, is there anything else you would like to mention about parent invovlement at your school?

34 P: Um the one thing that I do notice is when we have parent teacher um meetings that unfortunately the child is brought along therefore there really isn't the ability to have free on going speech during that time. I really think the parents should come alone. So that there can be really good interaction between

Scott Sage 4.8.17 - ATLAS.ti

Project Edit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Analysis Tools Views Windows Help

P-Docs P 1: Scott Sage 4.8.17 Quotations Codes Barrier to PI (8-0) Memos

P 1: Scott Sage 4.8.17

do you want to go to D.C? and everybody's like yeah we've never gone there that these families have not had the opportunity to do these trips so this is an affordable way to do that and I don't wanna minimize their decision to go on the trip as that but i certainly think it is part of it and I think it probably has something to do with there's not a lot of academic pressure and also it goes back to the kid is excited about the trip and the kids they want their parents at everything you know including field trips so, I think student pressure with it is a good opportunity not just for the kids but for the family as well to see some cool stuff so

68 I: Ok, I was just wondering when you brought that up.

69 P: I mean I can't really say for sure but that has been my experience.

70 I: What motivation, what do you think motivates parents to contact you and then what motivates you to contact parents?

71 P: Um, what motivates them to contact me often is anger or something that they feel was unfair so most of I can honestly I can not think of a single time in the past two years when I can think of that I had a parent contact me with an academic concern or a concern about report cards grades whereas in the other schools I taught at where on report card day at night I knew I would be getting twenty emails and the next day fifteen phone calls. I've never had a single concern about that. um so typically if I get a phone call from a parent I sort of get an oh no, what's this going to be and it typically is something negative. that they feel um and I'd say what motivates me to contact them is especially in the beginning of the year trying to build a relationship so they understand and feel comfortable with me and my classroom and then as the year goes on I mean the thing that's most motivating and this is probably, this is definitely not how it should be, but if you are having a struggle with a student behavior it's what's most it's sort of motivates you the most to contact the parent tho, it should be them for successes but in the business of the year it is what

72 I: And plenty of kids i can understand.

73 P: yeah

74 I: ok, I guess well actually that leads us to the last question, is there anything else you'd like to mention about parent involvement at your school?

75 P: Um, it's one of our big struggles. I mean we have our corrective action plan and we picked three areas and one of them is family involvement so I mean nobody in the school is naive to the idea that it is a challenge and if we want to be a school where students and parents feel comfortable then we have work to do and I think there are a lot of well intentioned teachers that are working to make it more comfortable but it has not been particularly easy, it's been, it's frustrating when you plan a big event and your intentions are to reach out to families and theres twice as many teachers as parents um, like it's

76 I: Does it become discouraging?

77 P: Oh, yeah

78 I: Do you start to cross things off the list and say we can't...

79 P: I have to say i've been there for two years so I've more taken it as ok, this doesn't work let's try something else, lets, try to come up with a solution which is why were trying some fo the new things but I know some of the teachers that have bee there for five six seven eight nine ten years sort of have an attitude of they're not going t come so lets not waste our time and that's not because they always felt that way, it's because of five ten years of personal experience sort of informs how you feel about the situation so,

80 I: In your two years there do you have you seen a change in last year to this year? With the plan that you put in place and the changes

81 P: Um, I think so, I would say last year. It was my first year there, it was a bit of culture shock cause it was so different in a school like this so I was more in a state of taking it all in and you know just getting my feet wet to the whole environment and this year I feel like I've been able to, after taking inventory, just trying to do things differently with my own practices so I say the bigger change hasn't come from last year to this year but from last year and the beginning of this year to now. So i'd say after a year and a half of taking inventory and trying some new things, I am seeing some improvement at the end of the year

82 I: Is there anything else you would like to add?

83 P: No, I think that's all. I think this is an important topic.

84 I: Yes, I agree.

APPENDIX H: Sample of Coded Transcription Using ATLAS.ti

Abby Smith 4.18.17 - ATLAS.ti

Project Edit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Analysis Tools Views Windows Help

P-Docs P1: Abby Smith 4.1 Quotations Codes Barriers to PI (1-0) Memos

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Codes

- Grade level taught
- Years of experience current
- Motivation to teach
- Favorite memory
- Successful PI
- Preservice training for PI
- Preservice training for PI
- Methods of contact
- Self Perception-abilities
- Self Perception-abilities
- Technology PI
- Successful PI
- Failure for PI
- Methods of contact
- Paper based PI
- Methods
- Technology PI
- Student as gatekeeper
- Methods of contact
- Solutions to PI problems
- Student as gat
- Positive effect on student
- Positive effect on student
- Suc
- Exemplar PI
- Methods of contact
- Parent motivation for PI
- Barriers to PI
- Communication

Abby Smith 4.18.17 - ATLAS.ti

Project Edit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Analysis Tools Views Windows Help

P-Docs P1: Abby Smith 4.1 Quotations Codes Barriers to PI (1-0) Memos

P1: Abby Smith 4.18.17

05 I: And where do you teach?

06 P: I teach in Staunton at the Bessie Weller.

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08 P: I teach third grade.

09 I: And how many years have you been teaching?

10 P: I have taught six years at Bessie Weller.

11 I: Ok, um, why did you become a teacher?

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- Positive effect on student
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- Exemplar PI
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- Parent motivation for PI
- Barriers to PI
- Communication

APPENDIX I: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 9, 2017

Allison Knappenberger

IRB Approval 2715.020917: Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Teachers' Experiences with Academic Parental Involvement at Denied Accreditation Elementary Schools in Virginia: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Allison Knappenberger,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

APPENDIX J: Codes Co-Occurancy Table

Codes Co-Occurancy Table

Columns: Selected (7 of 24):

- Barrier to PI (8-0)
- Conferences (1-0)
- Events for PI (1-0)
- Gender for PI (2-0)
- Methods for PI (6-0)
- Motivation for PI (3-0)
- PI Failure (4-0)

Rows: Selected (8 of 24):

- Gender for PI (2-0)
- Grade level (1-0)
- Professional development (1-0)
- Reason for PI- Teacher (2-0)
- Reason for teaching (1-0)
- Student as gatekeeper (1-0)
- Successful PI (10-0)
- Years of Experience (1-0)

	Barrier to PI	Conferences	Events for PI	Gender for PI	Methods for F	Motivation fo	PI Failure
Gender for PI	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Grade level	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Professional development	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Reason for PI- Teacher	2 - 0.13	n/a	n/a	n/a	3 - 0.25	3 - 0.27	2 - 0.18
Reason for teaching	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Student as gatekeeper	1 - 0.13	n/a	n/a	n/a	1 - 0.17	n/a	n/a
Successful PI	2 - 0.13	1 - 0.10	1 - 0.10	n/a	1 - 0.07	3 - 0.25	n/a
Years of Experience	1 - 0.11	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Column code result

Row code result

Calculated cell "Years of Experience" @ "PI Failure"

APPENDIX K: Scanned Pictorial Representation 1-10



